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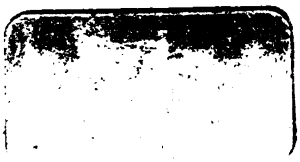

GODOLPHIN.

BY

SIR E. L. BULWER, BART., M.P., M.A.

Bulwer-Lytton Edward George
Earle Lytton.

"Sleep,
Voluptuous Cæsar, and security
Seize on thy powers!"—BEN JONSON—*Fall of Sejanus.*

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

RETURN TO LADY ERPINGHAM.—LADY ERPINGHAM FALLS ILL.—LORD ERPINGHAM RESOLVES TO GO ABROAD.—PLUTARCH UPON MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS.—PARTY AT ERPINGHAM HOUSE.—SAVILLE ON SOCIETY AND THE TASTE FOR THE LITTLE.—DAVID MANDEVILLE.—WOMEN, THEIR INFLUENCE AND EDUCATION.—THE NECESSITY OF AN OBJECT.—RELIGION.

As, after a long dream, we rise to the occupations of life, even so, with an awakening and more active feeling, I return from characters removed from the ordinary world—like Volktman* and his daughter—to the brilliant heroine of my narrative.

There is a certain tone about London society which enfeebles the mind without exciting it; and this state of temperament, more than all others, engenders satiety. In classes that border upon the highest, this ef-

* After all, an astrologer—nay, a cabalist—is not so monstrous a prodigy in the nineteenth century! In the north of Europe many such visionaries may yet be found: even at Paris I have met—and, doubtless, others have—angry and enthusiastic believers in magnetism.† In the year 1801, Lackington published a quarto, entitled "Magus: a Complete System of Occult Philosophy; treating of Alchymy, the Cabalistic Art, Natural and Celestial Magic," &c.—and a very impudent publication it is too. That Raphael should put forth astrological manuals is not a proof of his belief in the science he professes; but that it should *answer* to Raphael to put them forth, shows a tendency to belief in his purchasers.

† *Note to the present Edition.*—This note was written in 1833. Five years afterward grave physicians were lecturing in London upon Animal Magnetism. And my friend, Mr. Hare Townshend, a man so gifted by nature and fortune as to be above all suspicion of imposture, has just written a very interesting volume recording the success of his own experiments as a magnetiser; experiments as marvellous as any of the theories of the astrologer.

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fect is less evident: for there—there is some object to contend for. Fashion gives them an inducement. They struggle to emulate the *ton* of their superiors. It is an ambition of trifles, it is true; but it is still ambition. It frets, it irritates, but it keeps them alive. The great are the true victims of *ennui*. The more firmly seated their rank, the more established their position, the more their life stagnates into insipidity. Constance was at the height of her wishes. No one was so courted, so adored. One after one, she had humbled and subdued all those who had, before her marriage, trampled on her pride; or, after it, resisted her pretensions: a look from her had become a triumph, and a smile conferred a rank on its receiver. But this empire palled upon her: of too large a mind to be satisfied with petty pleasures and unreal distinctions, she still felt the SOMETHING of life was wanting. She was not blessed or cursed (as it may be) with children, and she had no companion in her husband. There might be times in which she regretted her choice, dazzling as it had proved; but she complained not of sorrow, but monotony.

Political intrigue could not fill up the vacuum of which Constance daily complained; and private intrigue, the usual solace of ladies of her *ton*—if not of her rank—did not present to her any irresistible allurement. When people have really nothing to do, they generally fall ill upon it; and, at length, the rich colour grew faint upon Lady Erpingham's cheek; her form wasted; the physicians hinted at consumption, and recommended a warmer clime. Lord Erpingham seized at the proposition; he was fond of Italy; he was bored with England.

Very stupid people often become very musical: it is a sort of pretension to intellect that suits their capacities. Plutarch says somewhere that the best musical instruments are made from the jawbones of asses. Plutarch never made a more sensible observation. Lord Erpingham had of late taken greatly to operas: he talked of writing one himself; and, not being a per-

former, he consoled himself by becoming a patron. Italy therefore presented to him manifold captivations: he thought of fiddling, but he talked only of his wife's health. Amid the regrets of the London world, they made their arrangements, and prepared to set out at the end of the season for the land of Paganini and Julius Cæsar.

Two nights before their departure, Lady Erpingham gave a farewell party to her more intimate acquaintance. Saville, who always contrived to be well with every one who was worth the trouble it cost him, was of course among the guests. Years had somewhat scathed him since he last appeared on our stage. Women had ceased to possess much attraction for his jaded eyes: gaming and speculation had gradually spread over the tastes once directed to other pursuits. His vivacity had deserted him in great measure, as years and infirmity began to stagnate and knot up the current of his veins; but conversation still possessed for and derived from him its wonted attraction. The sparkling *jeu d'esprit* had only sobered down into the quiet sarcasm: and if his wit flowed not from the exhilaration of the present moment, it was yet more exquisitely edged from his experience of the past: knowledge of the world is the true source of conversational wit.

"And how," said Saville, seating himself by Lady Erpingham, "how shall we bear London when you are gone? When society—the everlasting draught—had begun to pall upon us, you threw your pearls into the cup; and now we are grown so luxurious, that we shall never bear the wine without the pearl."

"But the pearl gave no taste to the wine: it only dissolved itself—idly, and in vain."

"Ah, my dear Lady Erpingham, the dullest of us, having once seen the pearl, could at least imagine that we were able to appreciate the subtleties of its influence. Where, in this little world of tedious realities, can we find anything even to imagine about when you abandon us?"

"Nay! do you conceive that I am so ignorant of the framework of society as to suppose that I shall not be easily replaced? King succeeds king without reference to the merits of either: so, in London, idol follows idol, though one be of jewels and the other of brass. Perhaps, when I return, I shall find you kneeling to the dull Lady A——, or worshipping the hideous Lady Z——."

"Le temps assez souvent a rendu legitime
Ce qui sembloit d'abord de ne se pouvoir sans crime,"

answered Saville, with a mock-heroic air. "The fact is, that we are an indolent people; the person who succeeds the most with us has but to push the most. You know how Mrs. ——, in spite of her red arms, her red gown, her city pronunciation, and her city connexions, managed—by dint of perseverance alone—to become a dispenser of consequence to the very countesses whom she at first could scarcely coax into a courtesy. The person who can stand ridicule and rudeness has only to *desire* to become the fashion—she or he must be so sooner or later."

"Of the immutability of one thing, among all the changes I may witness on my return, at least I am certain: no one still will dare to think for himself. The great want of each individual is the want of an opinion! For instance, who judges of a picture from his own knowledge of painting? Who does not wait to hear what Mr. —— or Lord —— (one of the six or seven privileged connoisseurs) says of it? Nay, not only the fate of a single picture, but of a whole school of painting, depends upon the caprice of some one of the self-elected dictators. The king, or the Duke of ——, has but to love the Dutch school and ridicule the Italian, and, behold, a Raphael will not sell, and a Teniers rises into infinite value. Dutch representations of candlesticks and boors are sought after with the most rapturous delight; the most disagreeable objects of nature become the most worshipped treasures of art; and we emulate each other in

testifying our exaltation of taste by contending for the pictured vulgarities by which taste itself is the most essentially degraded. In fact, too, the meaner the object, the more certain it is with us of becoming the rage. In the theatre, we run after the farce; in painting, we worship the Dutch school; in—"

"Literature?" said Saville.

"No! our literature still breathes of something noble; but why? Because books do not always depend upon a clique. A book, in order to succeed, does not require the opinion of Mr. Saville or Lady Erpingham so much as a picture or a ballet."

"I am not sure of that," answered Saville, as he withdrew presently afterward to a card-table, to share in the premeditated plunder of a young banker, who was proud of the honour of being cheated by persons of rank.

In another part of the rooms Constance found a certain old philosopher, whom I will call David Mandeville. There was something about this man that always charmed those who had sense enough to be discontented with the ordinary inhabitants of the Microcosm Society. The expression of his countenance was different from that of others: there was a breathing goodness in his face, an expansion of mind on his forehead. You perceived at once that he did not live among triflers, nor agitate himself with trifles. Serenity beamed from his look, but it was the serenity of thought. Constance sat down by him.

"Are you not sorry," said Mandeville, "to leave England? You, who have made yourself the centre of a circle which, for the varieties of its fascination, has never, perhaps, been equalled in this country? Wealth — rank — even wit — others might assemble round them: but none ever before convened into one splendid galaxy all who were eminent in art, famous in letters, wise in politics, and even (for who but you were ever above rivalship?) attractive in beauty. I should have thought it easier for us to fly from the Armida, than for the Armida to renounce the scene of

her enchantment; the scene in which De Staël bowed to the charms of her conversation, and Byron celebrated those of her person."

We may conceive the spell Constance had cast around her, when even philosophy (and Mandeville of all philosophers) had learned to flatter: but his flattery was sincerity.

"Alas!" said Constance, sighing, "even if your compliment were altogether true, you have mentioned nothing that should cost me regret. Vanity is one source of happiness, but it does not suffice to recompense us for the absence of all others. In leaving England I leave the scene of everlasting weariness: I am the victim of a feeling of sameness, and I look with hope to the prospect of change."

"Poor thing!" said the old philosopher, gazing mournfully on a creature who, so resplendent with advantages, yet felt the crumpled rose-leaf more than the luxury of the couch. "Wherever you go, the same polished society will present to you the same monotony. All courts are alike: men have change in action; but to women of your rank, all scenes are alike. You must not look without for an object—you must create one within. To be happy, we must render ourselves independent of others."

"Like all philosophers, you advise the Impossible," said Constance.

"How so? Have not the generality of your sex their peculiar object? One has the welfare of her children; another the interest of her husband; a third makes a passion of economy; a fourth of extravagance; a fifth of fashion; a sixth of solitude. Your friend yonder is always employed in nursing her own health: hypochondria supplies her with an object; she is really happy, because she fancies herself ill. Every one you name has an object in life that drives away *ennui* save yourself."

"I have one too," said Constance, smiling, "but it does not fill up all the spaces of time. The intervals between the acts are longer than the acts themselves."

"Is your object religion?" asked Mandeville, simply.

Constance was startled: the question was novel. "I fear not," said she, after a moment's hesitation, and with a downcast face.

"As I thought," returned Mandeville. "Now listen. The reason why you feel weariness more than those around you, is solely because your mind is more expansive. Small minds easily find objects: trifles amuse them; but a high soul covets things beyond its daily reach; trifles occupy its aim mechanically; the thought still wanders restless. This is the case with you. Your intellect preys upon itself. You would have been happier if your rank had been less;" Constance winced—(she thought of Godolphin)—"for then you would have been ambitious, and aspired to the very rank that now palls upon you." Mandeville continued:

"You women are at once debarred from public life, and yet influence it. You are the prisoners, and yet the despots of society. Have you talents? it is criminal to indulge them in public: and thus, as talent cannot be stifled, it is misdirected in private: you seek ascendancy over your own limited circle, and what should have been genius degenerates into cunning. Brought up from your cradles to dissembling, your most beautiful emotions, your finest principles, are always tinctured with artifice. As your talents, being stripped of their wings, are driven to creep along the earth and imbibe its mire and clay, so are your affections perpetually checked and tortured into conventional paths, and a spontaneous feeling is punished as a deliberate crime. You are untaught the broad and sound principles of life: all that you know of morals are its decencies and forms. Thus you are incapable of estimating the public virtues and the public deficiencies of a brother or a son; and one reason why *we* have no Brutus is because *you* have no Portia. Turkey has its seraglio for the person; but Custom, in Europe, has also a seraglio for the mind."

Constance smiled at the philosopher's passion; but she was a woman, and she was moved by it.

"Perhaps," said she, "in the progress of events, the state of the women may be improved as well as that of the men."

"Doubtless, at some future stage of the world. And believe me, Lady Erpingham, politician and schemer as you are, that no legislative reform *alone* will improve mankind: it is the social state which requires reformation."

"But you asked me, some minutes since," said Constance, after a pause, "if the object of my pursuit was religion. I disappointed, but did not surprise you by my answer."

"Yes: you grieved me, because, in your case, religion would alone fill the dreary vacuum of your time. For, with your enlarged and cultivated mind, you would not view the grandest of earthly questions in a narrow and sectarian light. You would not think religion consisted in a sanctified demeanour, in an ostentatious charity, in a harsh judgment of all without the pale of your opinions. You would behold in it a benign and harmonious system of morality, which takes from ceremony enough not to render it tedious, but impressive. The school of the Bayles and Voltaires is annihilated. Men begin now to feel that to philosophize is not to sneer. In Doubt we are stopped short at every outlet beyond the Sensual. In Belief lies the secret of all our valuable exertion. Two sentiments are enough to preserve even the idlest temper from stagnation—a desire and a *hope*. What, then, can we say of the desire to be useful and the hope to be immortal?"

This was language Constance had not often heard before, nor was it frequent in the lips of him who now uttered it. But an interest in the fate and happiness of one in whom he saw so much to admire, had made Mandeville anxious that she should entertain some principle which he could also esteem. And there was a fervour, a sincerity in his voice and manner, that thrilled to the very heart of Lady Erpingham. She pressed his hand in silence. She thought afterward over his

words; but worldly life is not easily accessible to any lasting impressions save those of vanity and love. Religion has two sources; the habit of early years, or the process of after thought. But to Constance had not been fated the advantage of the first; and how can deep thought of another world be a favourite employment with the scheming woman of this?

This is the only time that Mandeville appears in this work: a type of the rarity of the intervention of religious wisdom on the scenes of real life!

"By-the-way," said Saville, as, in departing, he encountered Constance by the door, and made his final adieus, "by-the-way, you will perhaps meet, somewhere in Italy, my old young friend, Percy Godolphin. He has not been pleased to prate of his whereabout to me; but I hear that he has been seen lately at Naples."

Constance coloured and her heart beat violently; but she answered indifferently and turned away.

The next morning they set off for Italy. But within one week from that day, what a change awaited Constance!

CHAPTER XXXIV.

AMBITION VINDICATED.—THE HOME OF GODOLPHIN AND LUCILLA.—LUCILLA'S MIND.—THE EFFECT OF HAPPY LOVE ON FEMALE TALENT.—THE EVE OF FAREWELL.—LUCILLA ALONE.—TEST OF A WOMAN'S AFFECTION.

Oh much-abused and highly-slandered passion!—passion rather of the soul than the heart—hateful to the pseudo-moralist, but viewed with favouring though not undiscriminating eyes by the true philosopher—bright-winged and august AMBITION! it is well for fools to revile thee, because thou art liable, like other utili-

ties, to abuse! The wind uproots the oak: but for every oak it uproots, it scatters a thousand acorns. Ixion embraced the cloud, but from the embrace sprang a hero. Thou, too, hast thy fits of violence and storm; but without thee life would stagnate: thou, too, pursuest thy chimeras; but even thy chimeras have the demigods for their offspring!

It was the great and prevailing misfortune of Godolphin's life that he had early taught himself to be superior to exertion. His talents, therefore, only preyed on himself; and, instead of the vigorous and daring actor of the world, he was alternately the indolent sensualist or the solitary dreamer. He did not view the stir of the great Babel as a man with a wholesome mind should do; and thus from his infirmities we draw a moral. The moral is not the worse in that it opposes the trite moralities of those who would take from action its motive: the men of genius who are not also men of ambition, are either humorists, or visionaries, or hypochondriacs.

By the side of one of the Italian lakes Godolphin and Lucilla fixed their abode, and here the young Idealist for some time imagined himself happy. Never, until now, so fond of nature as of cities, he gave himself up to the enchantment of the Eden around him. He spent the long sunny hours of noon on the smooth lake or among the sheltering trees by which it was encircled. The scenes he had witnessed in the world became to him the food of quiet meditation, and for the first time in his life thought did not weary him with its sameness.

When his steps turned homeward, the anxious form of Lucilla waited for him: her eye brightened at his approach, her spirit escaped restraint and bounded into joy: and Godolphin, touched by her delight, became eager to witness it; he felt the magnet of a home. Yet, as the first enthusiasm of passion died away, he could not but be sensible that Lucilla was scarcely a companion. Her fancy was indeed lively, and her capacity acute; but experience had set a confined limit to

her ideas. She had nothing save love and a fitful temperament upon which she could draw for conversation. Those whose education debars them from deriving instruction from things, have in general the power to extract amusement from persons: they can talk of the ridiculous Mrs. So-and-so, or the absurd Mr. Blank. But our lovers saw no society, and thus their commune was thrown entirely on their own internal resources.

There was always that in the peculiar mind of Godolphin which was inclined towards ideas too refined and subtile even for persons of cultivated intellect. If Constance could scarcely comprehend the tone of his character, we may believe that to Lucilla he was wholly a mystery. This perhaps enhanced *her* love, but the consciousness of it disappointed *his*. He felt that what he considered the noblest faculties he possessed were unappreciated. He was sometimes angry with Lucilla that she loved only those qualities in his character which he shared with the rest of mankind. His speculative and *Hamlet* temper—(let us here take Goëthe's view of Hamlet, and combine a certain weakness with the finer traits of the royal dreamer)—perpetually deserted the solid world, and flew to aërial creations. He could not appreciate the present. Had Godolphin loved Lucilla as he thought that he should love her, the beauties of her character would have blinded him to its defects; but his passion had been too sudden to be thoroughly grounded. It had arisen from the knowledge of *her* affection, not grown step by step from the natural bias of his own. Between the interval of liking and possession, love (to be durable) should progress through many stages. The doubt, the fear, the first pressure of the hand, the first kiss, each should be an epoch for remembrance to cling to. In moments of after coolness or anger, the mind should fly from the sated present to the million tender and freshening associations of the past. With these associations the affection renews its youth. How vast a store of melting reflections, how countless an accumulation of the spells that preserve constancy, does that

love forfeit in which the memory only commences with possession!

And the more delicate and thoughtful our nature, the more powerful are these associations. Do they not constitute the immense difference between the love and the intrigue? All that savours of youth make our most exquisite sensations, whether to experience or recall: thus, in the seasons of the year, we prize the spring; and in the effusions of the heart, the courtship.

Beautiful, too, and tender—wild and fresh in her tenderness—as Lucilla was, there was that in her character, in addition to her want of education, which did not wholly accord with Godolphin's preconception of the being his fancy had conjured up. His calm and profound nature desired one in whom he could not only confide, but, as it were, repose. Thus one great charm that had attracted him to Constance was the evenness and smoothness of her temper. But the self-formed mind of Lucilla was ever in a bright, and, to him, a wearying agitation; tears and smiles perpetually chased each other. Not comprehending his *character*, but thinking only and wholly of *him*, she distracted herself with conjectures and suspicions which she was too ingenuous and too impassioned to conceal. After watching him for hours, she would weep that he did not turn from his books or his revery to search also for her, with eyes equally yearning and tender as her own. The fear in absence, the absorbed devotion when present, that absolutely made her existence—she was wretched because he did not reciprocate with the same intensity of soul. She could conceive nothing of love but that which she felt herself; and she saw, daily and hourly, that in that love he did not sympathize: and therefore she imbittered her life by thinking that he did not return her affection.

"You wrong us both," said he, in answer to her tearful accusations; "but our sex love differently from yours."

"Ah," she replied, "I feel that love has no varieties: there is but one love, but there may be many counterfeits."

Godolphin smiled to think how the untutored daughter of nature had unconsciously uttered the sparkling aphorism of the most artificial of maxim-makers.* Lucilla saw the smile, and her tears flowed instantly.

"Thou mockest me."

"Thou art a little fool," said Godolphin, kindly, and he kissed away the storm.

And this was ever an easy matter. There was nothing unfeminine or sullen in Lucilla's irregulated moods; a kind word, a kind caress, allayed them in an instant, and turned the transient sorrow into sparkling delight. But they who know how irksome is the perpetual trouble of conciliation to a man meditative and indolent like Godolphin, will appreciate the pain that even her tenderness occasioned him.

There is one thing very noticeable in women when they have once obtained the object of their life—the sudden check that is given to the impulses of their genius! Content to have found the great magic of life, they do not look beyond to other but lesser objects, as they had been wont to do before. Hence we see so many who, before marriage, strike us with admiration from the vividness of their talents, and after marriage settle down into the mere machine. We wonder that we ever feared, while we praised, the brilliancy of an intellect that seems now never to wander from the limits of house and hearth. So with poor Lucilla; her restless mind and ardent genius had once seized on every object within their reach: she had taught herself music; she had learned the colourings and lines of art; not a book came in her way but she would have sought to extract a new idea. But she was now with Godolphin, and all other occupations for thought were gone; she had nothing beyond his love to wish for, nothing beyond his character to learn. He was the circle of hope, and her heart its centre; all lines were equal to that heart, so that they touched him. It is clear that this devotion prevented her, however, from fitting herself to be his companion; she did not seek

* Rochefoucauld.

to accomplish herself, but to study him: thus, in her extreme love was another reason why that love was not adequately returned.

But Godolphin felt all the responsibility that he had taken on himself. He felt how utterly the happiness of this poor and solitary child—for a child she was in character, and almost in years—depended on him. He roused himself, therefore, from his ordinary selfishness, and rarely, if ever, gave way to the irritation which she unknowingly but constantly kept alive. The balmy and delicious climate, the liquid serenity of the air, the majestic repose with which Nature invested the loveliness that surrounded their home, contributed to soften and calm his mind. And he had persuaded Lucilla to look without despair upon his occasional although short absence. Sometimes he passed two or three weeks at Rome, sometimes at Naples or Florence. He knew so well how necessary such intervals of absence are to the preservation of love, to the defeat of that satiety which creeps over us with custom, that he had resolutely enforced it as a necessity, although always under the excuse of business—a plea that Lucilla could understand and not resist; for the word business seemed to her like destiny; a call that, however odious, we cannot disobey. At first, indeed, she was disconsolate at the absence only of two days; but when she saw how eagerly her lover returned to her, with what a fresh charm he listened to her voice or her song, she began to confess that even in the evil might be good.

By degrees he accustomed her to longer intervals; and Lucilla relieved the dreariness of the time by the thousand little plans and surprises with which women delight in receiving the beloved wanderer after absence. His departure was a signal for a change in the house, the gardens, the arbour; and when she was tired with these occupations, she was not forbidden at least to write to him and receive his letters. Daily intoxication! and men's words are so much kinder when written than they are when uttered! Fortunately for Lucilla, her early habits, and her strange qualities of

mind, rendered her independent of companionship and fond of solitude.

Often Godolphin, who could not conceive how persons without education could entertain themselves, taking pity on her loneliness and seclusion, would say,

"But how, Lucilla, have you passed this long day, that I have spent away from you? among the woods or on the lake?"

And Lucilla, delighted to recount to him the history of her hours, would go over each incident, and body forth every thought that had occurred to her, with a grave and serious minuteness, that evinced her capabilities of dispensing with the world.

In this manner they passed somewhat more than two years: and, in spite of mortal annoyances, it was, perhaps, the happiest period of Godolphin's life, and the one that the least disappointed his too-exacting imagination. Lucilla had had one daughter, but she died a few weeks after birth. She wept over the perished flower, but was not inconsolable; for, before its loss, she had taught herself to think no affliction could be irremediable that did not happen to Godolphin. Perhaps Godolphin was the most grieved of the two; men of his character are fond of the occupation of watching the growth of minds; they put in practice their chimeras of education. Happy child, to have escaped an experiment!

It was the eve before one of Godolphin's periodical excursions, and it was Rome that he proposed to visit: Godolphin had lingered about the lake until the sun had set; and Lucilla, grown impatient, went forth to seek him. The day had been sultry, and now a sombre and breathless calm hung over the deepening eve. The pines, those gloomy children of the forest, which shed something of melancholy and somewhat of sternness over the brighter features of an Italian landscape, drooped heavily in the breezeless air. As she came on the border of the lake, its waves lay dark and voiceless; only, at intervals, the surf, fretting along the pebbles, made a low and dreary sound, or from the trees some

lingering songster sent forth a shrill and momentary note, and then again all became

"An atmosphere without a breath,
A silence sleeping there."

There was a spot where the trees, receding in a ring, left some bare and huge fragments of stone uncovered by verdure. It was the only spot around that rich and luxuriant scene that was not in harmony with the soft spirit of the place: might I indulge a fanciful comparison, I should say that it was like one desolate and gray remembrance in the midst of a career of pleasure. On this spot Godolphin now stood alone, looking along the still and purple waters that lay before him. Lucilla, with a light step, climbed the rugged stones, and, touching his shoulder, reproached him with a tender playfulness for his truancy.

"Lucilla," said he, when peace was restored, "what impressions does this dreary and prophetic pause of nature, before the upgathering of the storm, create in you? Does it inspire you with melancholy, or thought, or fear?"

"I see my star," answered Lucilla, pointing to a far and solitary orb, which hung islanded in a sea of cloud, that swept slowly and blackly onward; "I see my star, and I think more of that little light than the darkness around it."

"But it will presently be buried among the clouds," said Godolphin, smiling at that superstition which Lucilla had borrowed from her father.

"But the clouds pass away, and the star endures."

"You are of a sanguine nature, my Lucilla." Lucilla sighed.

"Why that sigh, dearest?"

"Because I am thinking how little even those who love us most, know of us! I never tell my disquiet and sorrow. There are times when thou wouldst not think me too warmly addicted to hope!"

"And what, poor idler, have you to fear?"

"Hast thou never felt it possible that thou couldst love me less?"

"Never!"

Lucilla raised her large, searching eyes, and gazed eagerly on his face, but in its calm features and placid brow she saw no ground for augury, whether propitious or evil. She turned away.

"I cannot think, Lucilla," said Godolphin, "that you ever direct those thoughts of yours, wandering although they be, to the future. Do they ever extend to the space of some ten or twenty years?"

"No. But one year may contain the whole history of my future."

As she spoke, the clouds gathered together round the solitary star to which Lucilla had pointed. The storm was at hand; they felt its approach, and turned homeward.

There is something more than ordinarily fearful in the tempests that visit those soft and garden climes. The unfrequency of such violent changes in the mood of nature serves to appal us as with an omen; it is like a sudden affliction in the midst of happiness, or a wound from the hand of one we love. For the stroke for which we are not prepared we have rather despondency than resistance.

As they reached their home the heavy rain-drops began to fall. They stood for some minutes at the casement, watching the coruscations of the lightning as it played over the black and heavy waters of the lake. Lucilla, whom the influences of nature always strangely and mysteriously affected, clung pale and almost trembling to Godolphin; but even in her fear there was delight in being so near to him, in whose love alone she thought there was protection. Oh! what luxury so dear to a woman as is the sense of dependance! Poor Lucilla! it was the last evening she ever spent with one whom she worshipped so entirely.

Godolphin remained up longer than Lucilla: when he joined her in her room the storm had ceased; and he found her standing by the open window, and gazing on the skies that were now bright and serene. Far in the deep stillness of midnight crept the waters of the

lake, hushed once more into silence, and reflecting the solemn and unfathomable stars. That chain of hills, which but to name awakens countless memories of romance, stretched behind, their blue and dim summits melting into the skies; and over one, higher than the rest, paused the new-risen moon, silvering the firs beneath, and farther down, breaking, with one long and yet mellower track of light, over the waters of the lake.

As Godolphin approached, he did so unconsciously, with a hushed and noiseless step. There is something in the quiet of nature like worship; it is as if from the breathless heart of things went up a prayer or a homage to the Arch-Creator. One feels subdued by a stillness so utter and so august; it extends itself to our own sensations, and deepens into an awe.

Both, then, looked on in silence, indulging, it may be, different thoughts. At length Lucilla said softly: "Tell me, hast thou really no faith in my father's creed? Are the stars quite dumb? Is there no truth in their movements, no gold in their lustre?"

"My Lucilla, reason and experience tell us that the astrologers nurse a dream that has no reality."

"Reason! well! Experience! why, did not *thy* father's mortal illness hurry thee from home at the very time in which *mine* foretold thy departure and its cause? I was then but a child; yet I shall never forget the paleness of thy cheek when my father uttered his prediction."

"I, too, was almost a child then, Lucilla."

"But that prediction was verified?"

"It was so; but how many did Volktman utter that were never verified? In true science there are no chances—no uncertainties."

"And my father," said Lucilla, unheeding the answer, "always foretold that thy lot and mine were to be entwined."

"And the prophecy, perhaps, disposed you to the fact. You might never have loved me, Lucilla, if

your thoughts had not been driven to dwell upon me by the prediction."

"Nay, I thought of thee before I heard the prophecy."

"But your father foretold *me*, dearest, cross and disappointment in my love. Was he not wrong? Am I not blessed with you?"

Lucilla threw herself into her lover's arms, and, as she kissed him, murmured, "Ah, if I *could* make thee happy!"

The next day Godolphin departed for Rome. Lucilla was more dejected at his departure than she had been even the first time it happened. The winter was now slowly approaching, and the weather was cold and dreary. That year it was unusually rainy and tempestuous; and as the wild gusts howled around her solitary home—how solitary now!—or she heard the big drops hurrying down on the agitated lake, she shuddered at her own despondent thoughts, and dreaded the gloom and loneliness of the lengthened night. For the first time since she had lived with Godolphin, she turned, but disconsolately, to the company of books.

Works of all sorts filled their home, but the spell that once spoke to her from the page was broken. If the book was not of love, it possessed no interest; if of love, she thought the description both tame and false. No one ever painted love so as fully to satisfy another: to some it is too florid, to some too commonplace; the god, like other gods, has no likeness on earth; and every wave on which the star of passion beams, breaks the lustre into different modifications of light.

As one day she was turning listlessly over some books that had been put aside by Godolphin in a closet, and hoping to find one that contained, as sometimes happened, his comments, or, at least, his remarks, she was somewhat startled to find among them several volumes which she remembered to have belonged to her father. Godolphin had bought them after his death, and put them by as relics of his singular friend, and

as samples of the laborious and self-willed aberration of the human intellect.

Few among these works could Lucilla comprehend, for they were chiefly in other tongues than the only two with which she was acquainted. But some, among which were manuscripts by her father, beautifully written and curiously ornamented (some of the chief works on the vainer sciences are only to be found in manuscript), she could contrive to decipher, by a little assistance from her memory, in recalling the signs and hieroglyphics which her father had often explained to her, and, indeed, caused her to copy out for him in his calculations. Always possessing an untaxed and unquestioned belief in the astral powers, she now took some interest in reading of their mysteries. Her father—secretly, perhaps, hoping to bequeath his name to the gratitude of some future Hermes—had, in his manuscripts, reduced into a system many scattered theories of others and many dogmas of his own. Over these, for they were simpler and easier than the crabbed and mystical speculations in the printed books, she more especially pored; and she was not sorry at finding fresh reasons for her untutored adoration for the stars and apparitions of the heavens.

Still, however, these bewildering researches made but a small part, comparatively speaking, of the occupation of her thoughts. To write to, and hear from Godolphin, had become to her more necessary than ever, and her letters were fuller and more minute in their details of love than even in the period of their first passion. Wouldst thou know if the woman thou lovest still loves thee, trust not her spoken words, her present smiles; examine her letters in absence; see if she dwells, as she once did, upon *trifles*—but trifles relating to *thee*. The things which the indifferent forget are among the most treasured meditations of love.

But Lucilla was not satisfied with the letters, frequent as they were, that she received in answer; they were kind, affectionate, but the something was wanting. "The best part of beauty is that which no pic-

ture can express." That which the heart most asks is that which no words can convey. Honesty—patriotism—religion—these have had their hypocrites for life; but passion permits only momentary dissemblers.

CHAPTER XXXV.

GODOLPHIN AT ROME.—THE CURE FOR A MORBID IDEALIST.—HIS EMBARRASSMENT IN REGARD TO LUCILLA.—THE RENCONTRE WITH AN OLD FRIEND.—THE COLOSSEUM.—A SURPRISE.

GODOLPHIN arrived at Rome: it was thronged with English. Among them were some whom he remembered with esteem in England. He had grown a little weary of his long solitude, and he entered with eagerness into the society of those who courted him. He was still an object of great interest to the idle; and, as men grow older, they become less able to dispense with attention. He was pleased to find his own importance, and he tasted the sweets of companionship with more gust than he had yet done. His talents, buried in obscurity, and uncalled forth by the society of Lucilla, were now perpetually tempted into action and stimulated by reward. It had never before appeared to him so charming a thing to shine; for, before, he had been sated with even that pleasure. Now, from long relaxation, it had become new; vanity had recovered its nice perception. He was no longer so absorbed as he had been by visionary images. He had given his fancy food in his long solitude and with its wild comate; and, being somewhat disappointed in the result, the living world became to him a fairer prospect than it had seemed while the world of imagination was untried. Nothing more confirms the health of the mind than indulging its favourite in-

firmity to its own cure. So Goëthe, in his memoirs, speaking of Werther, remarks, that "the composition of that extravagant work cured his character of extravagance."

Godolphin thought often of Lucilla; but perhaps, if the truth of his heart were known even to himself, a certain sentiment of pain and humiliation was associated with the tenderness of his remembrance. With her he had led a life, romantic it is true, but somewhat effeminate; and he thought now, surrounded by the gay and freshening tide of the world, somewhat mawkish in its romance. He did not experience a desire to return to the still lake and the gloomy pines: he felt that Lucilla did not suffice to make his world. He would have wished to bring her to Rome; to live with her more in public than he had hitherto done; to join, in short, her society with the more recreative dissipation of the world: but there were many obstacles to this plan in his fastidious imagination. So new to the world, its ways, its fashions, so strange and infantine in all things as Lucilla was, he trembled to expose her inexperience to the dangers that would beset it. He knew that his "friends" would pay very little respect to her reserve; and that, for one so lovely and unhackneyed, the snares of the wiliest and most subtle adepts of intrigue would be set. Godolphin did not undervalue Lucilla's pure and devoted heart; but he knew that the only sure antidote against the dangers of the world is the knowledge of the world. There was nothing in Lucilla that *ever* promised to attain that knowledge; her very nature seemed to depend on her ignorance of the nature of others. Joined to this fear, and a confused sentiment of delicacy towards her, a certain remorseful feeling in himself made him dislike bringing their connexion immediately before the curious and malignant world: so much had circumstance, and Lucilla's own self-willed temper and uncalculating love, contributed to drive the poor girl into his arms; and so truly had he chosen the generous, not the selfish part, until passion and

nature were exposed to a temptation that could have been withstood by none but the adherent to sterner principles than he (the creature of indolence and feeling) had ever clung to, that Godolphin, viewing his habits, his education, his whole bias and frame of mind, the estimates and customs of the world, may not, perhaps, be very rigidly judged for the nature of his tie to Lucilla. But I do not seek to excuse it, nor did he wholly excuse it to himself. The image of Volktman often occurred to him, and always in reproach. Living with Lucilla in a spot only trod by Italians, so indulgent to love, and where the whisper of shame could never reach *her* ear or awaken *his* remorse, her state did not, however, seem to her or himself degraded, and the purity of her girlish mind almost forbade the intrusion of the idea. But to bring her into public—among his own countrymen—and to feel that the generous and devoted girl, now so unconscious of sin, would be rated by English eyes with the basest and most abandoned of the sex—with the glorifiers in vice or the hypocrites for money—this was a thought which he could not contemplate, and which he felt he would rather pass his life in solitude than endure. But this very feeling gave an embarrassment to his situation with Lucilla, and yet more fixedly combined her image with that of a wearisome seclusion and an eternal *ennui*.

From the thought of Lucilla, coupled with its many embarrassments, Godolphin turned with avidity to the easy enjoyments of life—enjoyments that ask no care, and dispense with the trouble of reflection.

But among the visiters to Rome, the one whose sight gave to Godolphin the greatest pleasure was his old friend Augustus Saville. A decaying constitution, and a pulmonary attack in especial, had driven the accomplished voluptuary to a warmer climate. The meeting of the two friends was quite characteristic: it was at a *soirée* at an English house. Saville had managed to get up a whist-table.

"Look, Saville, there is Godolphin, your old friend!"

cried the host, who was looking on the game and waiting to cut in.

"Hist!" said Saville; "don't direct his attention to me until after the odd trick!"

Notwithstanding this coolness when a point was in question, Saville was extremely glad to meet his former pupil. They retired into a corner of the room, and talked over the world. Godolphin hastened to turn the conversation on Lady Erpingham.

"Ah!" said Saville, "I see from your questions, and yet more your tone of voice, that, although it is now several years since you met, you still preserve the sentiment—the weakness—Ah! bah!"

"Pshaw!" said Godolphin; "I owe her revenge, not love. But Erpingham—does she love him? He is handsome."

"Erpingham? What—you have not heard—"

"Heard what?"

"Oh, nothing: but, pardon me, they wait for me at the card-table. I should like to stay with you, but you know one must not be selfish; the table would be broken up without me. No virtue without self-sacrifice—eh?"

"But one moment. What is the matter with the Erpingham's? Have they quarrelled?"

"Quarrelled! bah! Quarrelled! no; I dare say she likes him better now than ever she did before." And Saville limped away to the table.

Godolphin remained for some time abstracted and thoughtful. At length, just as he was going away, Saville, who, having an unplayable hand and a bad partner, had somewhat lost his interest in the game, looked up and beckoned to him.

"Godolphin, my dear fellow, I am to escort a lady to see *the lions* to-morrow; a widow—a rich widow; handsome too. Do, for charity's sake, accompany us, or meet us at the Colosseum. How well that sounds—eh? About two?"

Godolphin refused at first, but, being pressed, assented.

Not surrounded by the lesser glories of modern Rome, but girt with the mighty desolation of the old City of Romulus, stands the most wonderful monument, perhaps, in the world of imperial magnificence —the Flavian Amphitheatre, to which, it has been believed, the colossal statue of the worst of emperors gave that name (the Colosseum), allied with the least ennobling remembrances, yet giving food to the loftiest thoughts. The least ennobling remembrances; for what can be more degrading than the amusements of a degraded people, who reserved meekness for their tyrants, and lavished ferocity on their shows? From that of the wild beast to that of the Christian martyr, blood has been the only sanctification of this temple to the Arts. The history of the Past broods like an air over those mighty arches; but Memory can find no reminiscence worthy of the spot. The amphitheatre was not built until history had become a record of the vice and debasement of the human race. The faun and the dryad had deserted the earth; no sweet superstition, the faith of the grotto and the green hill, could stamp with a delicate and undying spell the labours of man. Nor could the ruder but august virtues of the heroic age give to the tradition of the arch and column some stirring remembrance or exalting thought. Not only the warmth of fancy, but the greatness of soul was gone: the only triumph left to genius was to fix on its page the gloomy vices which made the annals of the world. Tacitus is the historian of the Colosseum. But the very darkness of the past gives to the thoughts excited within that immense pile a lofty but mournful character. A sense of vastness, for which, as we gaze, we cannot find words, but which bequeaths thoughts that our higher faculties would not willingly forego, creeps within us as we gaze on this Titan relic of gigantic crimes for ever passed away from the world.

And not only within the scene, but around the scene, what voices of old float upon the air! Yonder the triumphal arch of Constantine, its Corinthian arcades,

and the history of Trajan sculptured upon its marble alcove; the dark and gloomy verdure of the Palatine; the ruins of the palace of the Cæsars; the Mount of Fable, of Fame, of Luxury (the three epochs of nations); the habitation of Saturn; the home of Tully; the site of the Golden House of Nero! Look at your feet—look around; the waving weed, the broken column—Time's witness, and the earthquake's. In that contrast between grandeur and decay—in the unutterable and awful solemnity that, while rife with the records of past ages, is sad also with their ravage, you have felt the nature of eternity!

Through this vast amphitheatre, and giving way to such meditations, Godolphin passed on alone the day after his meeting with Saville; and, at the hour he had promised the latter to seek him, he mounted the wooden staircase which conducts the stranger to the wonders above the arena, and by one of the arches that looked over the still pines that slept afar off in the sun of noon, he saw a female in deep mourning, whom Saville appeared to be addressing. He joined them; the female turned round, and he beheld, pale and saddened, but how glorious still, the face of Constance!

To him the interview was unexpected, by her foreseen. The colour flushed over her cheek, the voice sank inaudible within. But Godolphin's emotion was more powerful and uncontrolled: violent tremblings literally shook him as he stood; he gasped for breath: the sight of the dead returned to earth would have affected him less.

In this immense ruin—in the spot where, most of earth, man feels the insignificance of an individual life, or of the rapid years over which it extends, he had encountered, suddenly, the being who had coloured all his existence. He was reminded at once of the grand epoch of his life, and of its utter unimportance. But these are the thoughts that would occur rather to us than him. Thought at that moment was an intolerable flash that burst on him for an instant, and then left all in darkness. He clung to the shattered corri-

dor for support. Constance seemed touched and surprised by so overwhelming an emotion; and the habitual hypocrisy in which women are reared, and by which they learn to conceal the sentiments they experience, and affect those they do not, came to her assistance and his own.

"It is many years, Mr. Godolphin," said she, in a collected but soft voice, "since we met."

"Years!" repeated Godolphin, vaguely, and approaching her with a slow and faltering step. "Years! *you* have not numbered them!"

Saville had retired a few steps on Godolphin's arrival, and had watched with a sardonic yet indifferent smile the proof of his friend's weakness. He now joined Godolphin, and said,

"You must forgive me, my dear Godolphin, for not apprizing you before of Lady Erpingham's arrival at Rome. But a delight is perhaps the greater for being sudden."

The word Erpingham thrilled displeasingly through Godolphin's veins; in some measure it restored him to himself. He bowed coldly, and muttered a few ceremonious words: and, while he was yet speaking, some stragglers that had belonged to Lady Erpingham's party came up. Fortunately, perhaps, for the self-possession of both, they, the once lovers, were separated from each other. But, whenever Constance turned her glance to Godolphin, she saw those large, searching, melancholy eyes, whose power she well recalled, fixed unmovingly on her, as seeking to read in her cheek the history of the years which had ripened its beauties—for another!

CHAPTER XXXVI.

DIALOGUE BETWEEN GODOLPHIN AND SAVILLE.—CERTAIN EVENTS EXPLAINED.—SAVILLE'S APOLOGY FOR A BAD HEART.—GODOLPHIN'S CONFUSED SENTIMENTS FOR LADY ERPINGHAM.

"Good God! Constance Vernon once more free!"

"And did you not really know it? Your retreat by the lake must have been indeed seclusion. It is seven months since Lord Erpingham died."

"Do I dream?" muttered Godolphin, as he strode hurriedly to and fro the apartment of his friend.

Saville, stretched on the sofa, diverted himself with mixing snuffs on a little table beside him. Nothing is so mournfully amusing in life as to see what trifles the most striking occurrences to us appear to our friends.

"But," said Saville, not looking up, "you seem very incurious to know how he died, and where. You must learn that Erpingham had two ruling passions—one for horses, the other for fiddlers. In setting off for Italy, he expected, naturally enough, to find the latter, but he thought he might as well export the former. He accordingly filled the vessel with quadrupeds, and the second day after landing he diverted the tedium of a foreign clime with a gentle ride. He met with a fall, and was brought home speechless. The loss of speech was not of great importance to his acquaintance; but he died that night, and the loss of his life was!—for he gave very fair dinners—ah! bah!" And Saville inhaled the fragrance of a new mixture.

Saville had a very pleasant way of telling a story, particularly if it related to a friend's death, or some such agreeable incident. "Poor Lady Erpingham was exceedingly shocked; and well she might be, for

I don't think weeds become her. She came here by slow stages, in order that the *illustrious* dead might chase away the remembrance of the deceased."

"Your heart has not improved, Saville."

"Heart! What's that? Oh, a thing servant-maids have, and break for John the footman. Heart! My dear fellow, you are turned canter, and make use of words without meaning."

Godolphin was not prepared for a conversation of this order; and Saville, in somewhat a more serious air, continued: "Every person, Godolphin, talks about the world! The world! it conveys different meanings to each, according to the nature of that circle which makes his world. But we all agree in one thing—the worldliness of the world. Now no man's world is so void of affection as ours—the polished, the courtly, the great world: the higher the air, the more pernicious to vegetation. Our very charm, our very fascination, depends upon a certain mockery; a subtile and fine ridicule on all persons and all things constitutes the essence of our conversation. Judge if that tone be friendly to the seriousness of the affections. Some poor dog among us marries, and household plebeianisms corrupt the most refined. Custom attaches the creature to his ugly wife and his squalling children; he grows affectionate, and becomes out of fashion. But we single men, dear Godolphin, have no one to care for but ourselves: the deaths that happen, unlike the ties that fall from the married man, do not interfere with our domestic comforts. We miss no one to make our tea, or give us our appetite-pills before dinner. Our losses are not intimate and household. We shrug our shoulders, and are not a whit the worse for them. Thus, for want of grieving, and caring, and fretting, we are happy enough to grow—come, I will use an epithet to please you—hard-hearted! We congeal into philosophy; and are we not then wise in adopting this life of isolation and indifference?"

Godolphin, wrapped in reflection, scarcely heeded the voluptuary, but Saville continued: he had grown

to that height in loneliness that he even loved talking to himself.

"Yes, wise! For this world is so filled with the selfish, that he who is not so labours under a disadvantage. Nor are we the worse for our apathy. If we jest at a man's misfortune, we do not do it to his face. Why not, out of the ill, which is misfortune, extract good, which is amusement? Three men in this room are made cheerful by a jest at a broken leg in the next: is the broken leg the worse for it? No; but the three men are made merry by the jest: is the jest wicked, then? Nay, it is a benevolence. But some cry, 'Ay, but this habit of disregarding misfortune blunts your wills when you have the power to relieve them.' Relieve! was ever such delusion? What can we relieve in the vast mass of human misfortunes? As well might we take a drop from the ocean, and cry, 'Ha, ha! we have lessened the sea!' What are even your public charities? what your best institutions? How few of the multitude are relieved at all; how few of that few relieved permanently. Men die, suffer, starve just as soon and just as numerously; these public institutions are only trees for the public conscience to go to roost upon. No, my dear fellow, everything I see in the world says, *Take care of thyself.* This is the true moral of life; every one who minds it gets on, thrives, and fattens; they who don't, come to us to borrow money, if gentlemen; or fall upon the parish, if plebeians. *I* mind it, my dear Godolphin; I have minded it all my life; I am very contented —content is the sign of virtue—ah! bah!"

Yes; Constance was a widow. The hand of her whom Percy Godolphin had loved so passionately, and whose voice even now thrilled to his inmost heart, and awakened the echoes that had slept for years, it was once more within her power to bestow, and within his to demand. What a host of emotions this thought gave birth to! Like the coming of the Hindoo god, she had appeared, and, lo, there was a new world! "And her look," he thought, "was kind, her voice full of a

gentle promise, her agitation was visible. She loves me still. Shall I fly to her feet? Shall I press for hope? And, oh! what, what happiness! — but *Lucilla!*"

This recollection was indeed a barrier that never failed to present itself to every prospect of hope and joy which the image of Constance coloured and called forth. Even for the object of his first love, could he desert one who had forsaken all for him, whose life was wrapped up in his affection? The very coolness with which he was sensible he had returned the attachment of this poor girl, made him more alive to the duties he owed her. If not bound to her by marriage, he considered with a generosity—barely, in truth, but justice, yet how rare in the world—that the tie between them was sacred; that only death could dissolve it. And now that tie was, perhaps, all that held him from attaining the dream of his past life.

Absorbed in these ideas, Godolphin contrived to let Saville's unsympathizing discourse glide unheeded along, without reflecting its images on the sense, until the name of Lady Erpingham again awakened his attention.

"You are going to her this evening," said Saville; "and you may thank me for that; for I asked you if you were thither bound in her hearing, in order to force her into granting you an invitation. She only sees her most intimate friends — you, I, and Lady Charlotte Deerham. Widows are shy of acquaintance during their first affliction. I always manage, however, to be among the admitted; caustic is good for some wounds."

"Nay," said Godolphin, smiling, "it is your friendly disposition that makes them sure of sympathy."

"You have hit it. But," continued Saville, "do you think madame likely to marry again, or shall you yourself adventure? Erpingham has left her nearly his whole fortune."

Irritated and impatient at Saville's tone, Godolphin rose. "Between you and me," said Saville, in wish-

ing him good-by, "I don't think she will ever marry again. Lady Erpingham is fond of power and liberty; even the young Godolphin—and you are not so handsome as you were—will find it a hopeless suit."

"Pshaw!" muttered Godolphin, as he departed. But the last words of Saville had created a new feeling in his breast. It was then possible, nay, highly probable, that he might have spared himself the contest he had undergone, and that the choice between Lucilla and Constance might never be permitted him. "At all events," said he, almost aloud, "I will see if this conjecture be true: if Constance, yet remembering our early love, yet feeling for the years of secret pining which her ambition bequeathed me, should appear willing to grant me the atonement fate has placed within her power, then, then it will be time for this self-sacrifice."

The social relations of the sex often make men villanous—they more often make them weak.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AN EVENING WITH CONSTANCE.

CONSTANCE's heart was in her eyes when she saw Godolphin that evening. She had, it is true, as Saville observed, been compelled by common courtesy to invite him; and although there was an embarrassment in their meeting, who shall imagine that it did not bring to Constance more of pleasure than pain? She had been deeply shocked by Lord Erpingham's sudden death: they had not been congenial minds, but the great have an advantage denied to the less wealthy orders. Among the former, a husband and wife need not weary each other with constant companionships; different establishments, different hours, different pursuits,

allow them to pass life in a great measure apart, so that there is no necessity for hatred; and indifference is the coldest feeling which custom induces.

Still in the prime of youth and at the zenith of her beauty, Constance was independent. She was in the enjoyment of the wealth and rank her early habits of thought had deemed indispensable, and she now, for the first time, possessed the power of sharing them with whom she pleased. At this thought, how naturally her heart flew back to Godolphin! And as she now gazed, although by stealth, at his countenance, as he sat at a little distance from her, and in his turn watched for the tokens of past remembrance, she was deeply touched by the change (light as it seemed to others) which years had brought to him; and in recalling the emotion he had testified at meeting her, she suffered her heart to soften, while it reproached her, in whispering, "Thou art the cause!" All the fire, the ardour of a character not then confirmed, which, when she last saw him, spoke in his eye and mien, were gone for ever. The irregular brilliancy of his converse, the earnestness of his air and gesture, were replaced by a calm, an even, and a melancholy composure. His forehead was stamped with the lines of thought; and the hair, grown thinner towards the temples, no longer concealed, from its luxuriance, the pale expanse of his brow. The air of delicate health which at first interested her in his appearance still lingered, and gave its wonted and ineffable charm to his low voice and the gentle expression of his eyes. By degrees, the conversation, at first partial and scattered, became more general. Constance and Godolphin were drawn into it.

"It is impossible," said Godolphin, "to compare life in a southern climate with that which we lead in colder countries. There is an indolence, a *laissez aller*, philosophic *insouciance*, produced by living under these warm suns, and apart from the ambition and the objects of our own nation, which produce at last a state of mind that divides us for ever from our countrymen. It is like living amid perpetual music—a different kind

of life—a soft, lazy, voluptuous romance of feeling, that indisposes us to action—almost to motion. So far from a sojourn in Italy being friendly to the growth of ambition, it nips and almost destroys the germe."

"In fact, it leaves us fit for nothing but love," said Saville; "an occupation that levels us with the silliest part of our species."

"Fools cannot love," said Lady Charlotte.

"Pardon me, love and folly are synonymous in more languages than the French," answered Saville.

"In truth," said Godolphin, "the love which you both allude to is not worth disputing about."

"What love is?" asked Saville.

"First love," cried Lady Charlotte; "is it not, Mr. Godolphin?"

Godolphin changed colour, and his eyes met those of Constance. She too sighed and looked down: Godolphin remained silent.

"Nay, Mr. Godolphin, answer me," said Lady Charlotte; "I appeal to you!"

"First love, then," said Godolphin, endeavouring to speak composedly, "has this advantage over others: it is usually disappointed, and regret for ever keeps it alive."

The tone of his voice struck Constance to the heart. Nor did she speak again, save with visible effort, during the rest of the evening.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

CONSTANCE'S UNDIMINISHED LOVE FOR GODOLPHIN.—HER REMORSE AND HER HOPE.—THE CAPITOL.—THE DIFFERENT THOUGHTS OF GODOLPHIN AND CONSTANCE AT THE VIEW.—THE TENDER EXPRESSIONS OF CONSTANCE.

ALL that Constance heard from others of Godolphin's life since they parted, increased her long-nursed interest in his fate. His desultory habits, his long absences from cities, which were understood to be passed in utter and obscure solitude (for the partner of the solitude and its exact spot were not known), she coupled with the quiet melancholy in his aspect, with his half-reproachful glances towards herself, and with the emotions which he had given vent to in their conversation. And of this objectless and unsatisfactory life she was led to consider herself the cause. With a bitter pang she recalled his early words, when he said, "My future is in your hands;" and she contrasted his vivid energies, his cultivated mind, his high talents, with the life which had rendered them all so idle to others and unprofitable to himself. Few, very few, know how powerfully the sentiment that another's happiness is at her control speaks to a woman's heart. Accustomed to dependance herself, the feeling that another depends on her is the most soothing aliment to her pride. This makes a main cause of her love to her children; they would be incomparably less dear to her if they were made independent of her cares. And years, which had brought the young countess acquainted with the nothingness of the world, had softened and deepened the sources of her affections, in proportion as they had checked those of her ambition. She could not, she did not, seek to disguise from herself that Godolphin

yet loved her; she anticipated the hour when he would avow that love, and when she might be permitted to atone for all of disappointment that her former rejection might have brought to him. She felt, too, that it would be a noble as well as delightful task to awaken an intellect so brilliant to the natural objects of its display; to call forth into active life his teeming thought, and the rich eloquence with which he could convey it. Nor in this hope were her more selfish designs, her political schemings, and her desire of sway over those whom she loved to humble, forgotten; but they made, however—to be just—a small part of her meditations. Her hopes were chiefly of a more generous order: "I refused thee," she thought, "when I was poor and dependant: now that I have wealth and rank, how gladly will I yield them to thy bidding!"

But Godolphin, as if unconscious of this favourable bias of her inclinations, did not warm from his reserve. On the contrary, his first abstraction and his first agitation had both subsided into a distant and cool self-possession. They met often, but he avoided all nearer or less general communication. She saw, however, that his eyes were constantly in search of her, and that a slight trembling in his voice when he addressed her belied the calmness of his manner. Sometimes, too, a word, or a touch from her, would awaken the ill-concealed emotions: his lips seemed about to own the triumph of her and of the past; but, as if by a violent effort, they were again sealed; and not unoften, evidently unwilling to trust his self-command, he would abruptly depart. In short, Constance perceived that a strange embarrassment, the causes of which she could not divine, hung about him, and that his conduct was regulated by some secret motive, which did not spring from the circumstances that had occurred between them. For it was evident that he was not withheld by any resentment towards her from her former rejection: even his looks, his words, had betrayed that he had done more than forgive. Lady Charlotte Deerham had heard from Saville of their

former attachment: she was a woman of the world, and thought it but common delicacy to give them all occasion to renew it. She always, therefore, took occasion to retire from the immediate vicinity of Constance whenever Godolphin approached, and, as if by accident, to leave them the opportunity to be sufficiently alone. This was a danger that Godolphin had, however, hitherto avoided. One day fate counteracted prudence, and a conference ensued, which perplexed Constance and tried severely the resolution of Godolphin.

They went together to the Capitol, from whose height is beheld, perhaps, the most imposing landscape in the world. It was a sight pre-eminently calculated to arouse and inspire the ambitious and working mind of the young countess.

"Do you think," said she to Godolphin, who stood beside her, "that there lives any one who could behold these countless monuments of eternal glory, and not sigh to think of the triteness, or, rather, burn to rise from the level of our ordinary life?"

"Nay," said Godolphin; "to you the view may be an inspiration, to others a warning. The arch and the ruin you survey speak of change yet more eloquently than glory. Look on the spot where once was the temple of Romulus: there stands the little church of an obscure saint. Just below you is the Tarpeian Rock: we cannot see it; it is hidden from us by a crowd of miserable houses. Along the ancient plain of the Campus Martius, behold the numberless spires of a new religion, and the palaces of a modern race! Amid them you see the triumphal columns of Trajan and Marcus Antoninus; but whose are the figures that crown their summits? St. Peter's and St. Paul's! And this awful wilderness of men's labours—this scene and token of human revolutions—inspires you with a love of glory; to me it proves its nothingness. An irresistible, a *crushing* sense of the littleness and brief life of our most ardent and sagacious achieve-

ments, seems to me to float, like a voice, over the place!"

"And are you still, then," said Constance, with a half sigh, "dead to all but the enjoyment of the present moment?"

"No," replied Godolphin, in a low and trembling voice: "I am not dead to the regret of the past!"

Constance blushed deeply; but Godolphin, as if feeling he had committed himself too far, continued in a hurried tone: "Let us turn our eyes," said he, "yonder among the olive groves. There,

'Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife,'

were the summer retreats of Rome's brightest and most enduring spirits. There was the retirement of Horace and Mæcenas: there Brutus forgot his harsher genius; and there the inscrutable and profound Augustus indulged in those graceful relaxations—those sacrifices to wit, and poetry, and wisdom, which have made us do so unwilling and reserved a justice to the crimes of his earlier and the hypocrisy of his later years. Here again is a reproach to your ambition," added Godolphin, smiling; "his ambition made Augustus odious: his occasional forgetfulness of ambition alone redeems him."

"And what, then," said Constance, "would you consider inactivity the happiest life for one sensible of talents higher than the common standard?"

"Nay, let those talents be devoted to the discovery of pleasures, not the search after labours; the higher our talents, the keener our perceptions; the keener our perceptions, the more intense our capacities for pleasure:* let pleasure, then, be our object. Let us find out what is best fitted to give our peculiar tastes gratification, and, having found out, steadily pursue it."

"Out on you! it is a selfish, an ignoble system," said Constance. "You smile: well, I may be unphilosophical, I do not deny it. But give me one hour of

* I suppose Godolphin, by the word *pleasure*, rather signifies *happiness*.

glory rather than a life of luxurious indolence. Oh, would," added Constance, kindling as she spoke, "that you—you, Mr. Godolphin—with an intellect so formed for high accomplishment—with all the weapons and energies of life at your command—would that you could awaken to a more worthy estimate—pardon me—of the uses of exertion! Surely, surely you must be sensible of the calls that your country, that mankind, have at this epoch of the world upon all—all, especially, possessing your advantages and powers. Can we pierce one inch beyond the surface of society, and not see that great events are hastening to their birth? Will you let those inferior to yourself hurry on before you, and sit inactive while they win the reward? Will you have no share in the bright drama that is already prepared behind the dark curtain of fate, and which will have a world for its spectators? Ah, how rejoiced, how elated with myself I should feel, if I could win over one like you to the great cause of honourable exertion!"

For one instant Godolphin's eye sparkled and his pale cheek burned; but the transient emotion faded away as he answered,

"Eight years ago, when she who spoke to me was Constance Vernon, her wish might have moulded me according to her will. Now," and he struggled with emotion and turned away his face, "*now* it is too late!"

Constance was smitten to the heart. She laid her hand gently on his arm, and said in a sweet and soothing tone, "No, Percy, not too late!"

At that instant, and before Godolphin could reply, they were joined by Saville and Lady Charlotte Deerham.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

LUCILLA'S LETTER.—THE EFFECT IT PRODUCES ON GODOLPHIN.

The short conversation recorded in the last chapter could not but show to Godolphin the dangerous ground on which his fidelity to Lucilla rested. Never before —no, not in the young time of their first passion, had Constance seemed to him so lovely or so worthy of love. Her manners now were so much more soft and unreserved than they had necessarily been at a period when Constance had resolved not to listen to his addresses or her own heart, that the only part of her character that had ever repulsed his pride or offended his tastes seemed vanished for ever. A more subdued and gentle spirit had descended on her surpassing beauty, and the change was of an order that Percy Godolphin could especially appreciate. And the world, for which he owned reluctantly that she yet lived too much, had nevertheless seemed rather to enlarge and animate the natural nobleness of her mind than to fritter it down to the standard of its common votaries. When she spoke he delighted in, even while he dissented from, the high and bold views which she conceived. He loved her indignation of all that was mean and low—her passion for all that was daring and exalted. Never was he cast down from the height of the imaginative part of his love, by hearing from her lips one petty passion or one sordid desire; much about her was erroneous, but all was lofty and generous—even in error. And the years that had divided them had only taught him to feel more deeply how rare was the order of her character, and how impossible it was ever to behold her like. All the sentiments, faculties, emotions, which, in his affection for

Lucilla, had remained dormant, were excited into full play the moment he was in the presence of Constance. She engrossed no petty portion—she demanded and obtained the whole empire—of his soul. And against this empire he had now to contend! Torn as he was by a thousand conflicting emotions, a letter from Lucilla was suddenly put into his hands; its contents were as follows:

LUCILLA'S LETTER.

"Thy last letter, my love, was so short and hurried, that it has not cost me my usual pains to learn it by heart; nor (shall I tell the truth?) have I been so eager as I once was to commit all thy words to my memory. Why, I know not, and will guess not; but there is something in thy letters since we parted that chills me; they throw back my heart upon itself. I tear open the seal with so much eagerness—thou wouldst smile if thou couldst see me; and when I discover how few are the words upon which I am to live for many days, I feel sick and disappointed, and lay down the letter. Then I chide myself, and say, 'At least these few words will be kind!' and I spell them one by one, not to hurry over my only solace. Alas! before I arrive at the end, I am blinded by my tears; my love for thee, so bounding and full of life, seems frozen and arrested at every line. And then I lie down for very weariness, and wish to die. Oh God, if the time has come which I have always dreaded—if thou shouldst no longer love me! And how reasonable this fear is! For what am I to thee? How often dost thou complain that I can understand thee not! how often dost thou imply that there is much of thy nature which I am incapable—unworthy—to learn! If this be so, how natural is it to dread that thou wilt find others whom thou wilt fancy more congenial to thee, and that absence will only remind thee more of my imperfections!

"And yet I think that I have read thee to the letter; I think that my love, which is always following thee, always watching thee, always conjecturing thy wishes,

must have penetrated into every secret chamber of thy heart; only I want words to express what I feel, and thou layest the blame upon the want of feeling! I know how untutored, how ignorant I must seem to thee; and sometimes—and lately very often—I reproach myself that I have not more diligently sought to make myself a worthier companion to thee. I think, if I had the same means as others, I should acquire the same facility of expressing my thoughts; and my thoughts thou couldst never blame, for I know that they are full of a love to thee which—no—not the wisest, the most brilliant whom thou mayst see could equal even in imagination. But I have sought to mend this deficiency since we parted; and I have looked into all the books thou hast loved to read, and I fancy that I have imbibed *now* the same ideas which pleased thee, and in which once thou imaginedst I could not sympathize. Yet how mistaken thou hast been! I see, by the marks thou hast placed on the page, the sentiments that more especially charm thee; and I know that I have felt them much, oh! *how* much more deeply and vividly than they are there expressed, only they seemed to me to have no language: methinks that I have learned the language now. And I have taught myself songs thou wilt love to hear when thou returnest home to me; and I have practised music; and I think—nay, I am sure—that time will not pass so heavily with *thee* as when thou wast last here.

"And when shall I see thee again? Forgive me if I press thee to return. Thou hast stayed away longer than thou hast been wont, but that I would not heed; it is not the number of days, but the sensations with which I have counted them, that make me pine for thy beloved voice, and long once more to behold thee. Never before did I so feel thy absence or was so utterly wretched. A secret voice whispers me that we are parted for ever. I cannot withstand the omens of my own heart. When my poor father lived, I did not, child as I was, partake of those sentiments with which he was wont to say the stars inspired us. I could not

see in them the boders of fear and the preachers of sad tidings; they seemed to me only full of serenity and tenderness, and the promise of enduring love! And ever, when I looked on them, I thought of thee; and thy image to me then, as thou knowest it was from childhood, was bright with unimaginable but never melancholy spells. But now, although I love thee so far more powerfully, I cannot divest the thought of thee from a certain sadness; and so the stars, which are like thee, which are full of thee, have a sadness also! And this, the bed, where every morning I stretch my arms for thee, and find thee not, and have yet to live through the day, and on which I now write this letter to thee—for I, who used to rise with the sun, am now too dispirited not to endeavour to cheat the weary day—I have made them place nearer to the window; and I look out upon the still skies every night, and have made a friend of every star I see. I question it of thyself, and wonder, when thou lookest at it, if thou hast any thought of me! I love to look upon the heavens much more than upon the earth; for the trees, and the waters, and the hills around, thou canst not behold; but the same heaven which I survey is above thee also; and this, our common companion, seems in some measure to unite us. And I have thought over my father's lore, and have tried to learn it—nay, thou mayst smile, but it is thy absence that has taught me superstition.

"But tell me, dearest, kindest, tell me when—oh, when wilt thou return? Return only this once, if but for a day, and I will never persecute thee again. Truant as thou art, thou shalt have full liberty for life. But I cannot tell thee how sad and heavy I am grown, and every hour knocks at my heart like a knell! Come back to thy poor Lucilla, if only to see what joy is! Come, I know thou wilt! But, should anything I do not foresee detain thee, fix at least the day—nay, if possible, the hour—when we shall meet, and let the letter which conveys such happy tidings be long, and kind, and full of thee, as thy letters once were. I know I weary thee, but I cannot help it. I am weak,

and dejected, and cast down, and have only heart enough to pray for thy return."

"You have conquered—you have conquered, Lucilla!" said Godolphin, as he kissed this wild and reproachful letter, and thrust it into his bosom; "and I—I will be wretched rather than you shall be so!"

His heart rebuked him even for that last sentence. This pure and devoted attachment—was it, indeed, an unhappiness to obtain and a sacrifice to return? Stung by his thoughts and impatient of rest, he hurried into the air; he traversed the city; he passed St. Sebastian's gate, gained the Appia Via, and saw—lone and sombre, as of old—the house of the departed Volktman. He had half unconsciously sought that direction, in order to strengthen his purpose and sustain his conscience in its right path. He now hurried onward, and stopped not till he stood in that lovely and haunted spot—the valley of Egeria—in which he had met Lucilla on the day that he first learned her love. There was a gloom over the scene now, for the day was dark and clouded: the birds were silent; a heavy oppression seemed to brood upon the air. He entered that grotto which is the witness of the most beautiful love-story chronicled even in the soft south. He recalled the passionate and burning emotions which, the last time he had been within that cell, he had felt for Lucilla, and had construed erroneously into real love. As he looked around, how different an aspect the spot wore! Then those walls, that spring, even that mutilated statue, had seemed to him the encouragers of the soft sensations he had indulged. Now they appeared to reprove the very weakness which hallowed themselves: the associations spoke to him in another tone. The broken statue of the river god—the desert silence in which the water of the sweet fountain keeps its melancholy course—the profound and chilling solitude of the spot—all seemed eloquent, not of love, but the broken hope and the dreary loneliness that succeed it! The gentle plant (the capillaire) that overhangs the

sides of the grotto, and nourishes itself on the dews of the fountain, seemed an emblem of love itself after disappointment—the love that might henceforth be Lucilla's—drooping in silence on the spot once consecrated to rapture, and feeding itself with tears. There was something mocking to human passion in the very antiquity of the spot; four-and-twenty centuries had passed away since the origin of the tale that made it holy—and that tale, too, was fable! What, in this vast accumulation of the sands of time, was a solitary atom! What, among the millions, the myriads, that around that desolate spot had loved and forgotten love, was the brief passion of one mortal, withering as it sprung! Thus differently moralizes the heart, according to the passion which bestows on it the text.

Before he regained his home Godolphin's resolve was taken. The next day he had promised Constance to attend her to Tivoli; he resolved then to take leave of her, and on the following day to return to Lucilla. He remembered, with bitter reproach, that he had not written to her for a length of time, treble the accustomed interval between his letters; and felt that, while at the moment she had written the lines he had now pressed to his bosom, she was expecting, with unutterable fondness and anxiety, to receive his lukewarm assurances of continued love; the letter he was about to write in answer to hers was the first one that would greet her eyes. But he resolved that in that letter, at least, she should not be disappointed. He wrote at length, and with all the outpourings of a tenderness reawakened by remorse. He informed her of his immediate return, and even forced himself to dwell upon it with kindly hypocrisy of transport. For the first time for several weeks he felt satisfied with himself as he sealed his letter. It is doubtful whether that letter Lucilla *ever* received.

CHAPTER XL.

TIVOLI.—THE SIREN'S CAVE.—THE CONFESSION.

ALONG the deathly *Campagna*, a weary and desolate length of way—through a mean and squalid row of houses—you thread your course: and, behold—Tivoli bursts upon you!

"Look—look!" cried Constance, with enthusiasm, as she pointed to the rushing torrent that, through matted trees and cragged precipices, thundered on.

Astonished at Godolphin's silence, he whom scenery was usually so wont to kindle and inspire, she turned hastily round, and her whole tide of feeling was revulsed by the absorbed but intense dejection written on his countenance.

"Why," said she, after a short pause, and affecting a playful smile, "why, how provoking is this! In general, not a common patch of green with an old tree in the centre, not a common rivulet with a willow hanging over it, escapes you. You insist upon our sharing your raptures—you dilate on the picturesque—you rise into eloquence; nay, you persuade us into your enthusiasm, or you quarrel with us for our coldness; and now, with this divinest of earthly scenes around us—when even Lady Charlotte is excited, and Mr. Saville forgets himself, you are stricken into silence and apathy! The reason—if it be not too abstruse?"

"It is here!" said Godolphin, mournfully, and pressing his hand to his heart.

Constance turned aside; she indulged herself with the hope that he alluded to former scenes, and despaired of the future from their remembrance. She connected his melancholy with herself, and knew that, when referred to her, she could dispel it. Inspired by this idea, and exhilarated by the beauty of the morning and

the wonderful magnificence of nature, she indulged her spirits to overflowing. And as her brilliant mind lighted up every subject it touched, now glowing over description, now flashing into remark, Godolphin at one time forgot, and at another more keenly felt, the magnitude of the sacrifice he was about to make. But every one knows that feeling which, when we are unhappy, illumines (if I may so speak) our outward seeming from the fierceness of our inward despair; that recklessness which is the intoxication of our grief.

By degrees Godolphin broke from his reserve. He seemed to catch the enthusiasm of Constance; he echoed back, he led into new and more dazzling directions the delighted remarks of his beautiful companion. His mind, profoundly and profusely rich in the treasures of old times, called up a spirit from every object. The waterfall, the ruin, the hollow cave—the steep bank crested with the olive—the airy temple, the dark pomp of the cypress grove, and the roar of the headlong Anio—*all* he touched with the magic of the past—clad with the glories of history and of legend—and decked ever and anon with the flowers of the eternal Poesy that yet walks, mourning for her children, among the vines and waterfalls of the ancient Tibur. And Constance, as she listened to him, entranced, until she herself unconsciously grew silent, indulged without reserve in that the proudest luxury of love—pride in the beloved object. Never had the rare and various genius of Godolphin appeared so worthy of admiration: when his voice ceased, it seemed to Constance like a sudden blank in the creation.

Godolphin and the young countess were several paces before the little party, and they now took their way towards the Siren's Cave. The path that leads to that singular spot is humid with an eternal spray; and it is so abrupt and slippery, that, in order to preserve your footing, you must cling to the bushes that vegetate around the sides of the precipice.

"Let us dispense with our guide," said Godolphin. "I know every part of the way, and I am sure you

share with me in dislike to these hackneyed indicators and signposts for admiration. Let us leave him to Lady Charlotte and Saville, and suffer me to be your guide to the cavern." Constance readily enough assented, and they proceeded. Saville, by no means liking the difficult and perilous path which was to lead only to a very cold place, soon halted, and suggested to Lady Charlotte the propriety of doing the same. Lady Charlotte much preferred the wit of her companion's conversation to the picturesque: "Besides," as she said, "she had seen the cave before." Accordingly, they both waited for the return of the more adventurous countess and her guide.

Unconscious of the defalcation of her friends, and not—from the attention that every step required—once looking behind, Constance continued. And now, how delightful to her seemed that rugged way, as with every moment Godolphin's care—Godolphin's hand became necessary; and he, inspired, inflamed by her company, by her touch, by the softness of her manner and the devotion of her attention—no, no! not *yet* was Lucilla forgotten!

And now they stood within the Siren's Cave. From this spot alone you can view that terrible descent of waters which rushes to earth like the coming of a god! The rocks dripped around them, the torrent dashed at their very feet. Down, down, in thunder, for ever and for ever, dashed the might of the maddening element; above, all wrath; below, all blackness; there the cataract, here the abyss. Not a moment's pause to the fury, not a moment's silence to the roar; forward to the last glimpse of the sun, the curse of labour and the soul of unutterable strength shall be upon those waters! The demon, tormented to an eternity, filling his dread dwelling-place with the unresting and unearthly voice of his rage and despair, is the only type meet for the spirit of the cataract.

And there—amid this awful and tremendous eternity of strife and power—stood two beings whose momentary existence was filled with the master-passion of hu-

manity. And that passion was yet audible there: the nature without could not subdue that within. Even amid the icy showers of spray that fell around, and would have frozen the veins of others, Godolphin felt the burning at his heart. Constance was indeed utterly lost in a whirl and chaos of awe and admiration, which deprived her of all words. But it was the nature of her wayward lover to be aroused only to the thorough knowledge of his powers and passions among the more unfrequent and fierce excitements of life. A wild emotion now urged him on; something of that turbulent exaggeration of mind which gave rise to a memorable and disputed saying, "If thou stoodest on a precipice with thy mistress, hast thou ever felt the desire to plunge with her into the abyss? If so—thou hast loved!" No doubt the sentiment is exaggerated, but there are times when love is exaggerated too. And now Constance, without knowing it, had clung closer and closer to Godolphin. His hand at first—now his arm—supported her; and at length, by an irresistible and maddening impulse, he clasped to her his breast, and whispered in a voice which was heard by her even amid the thunder of the giant waters, "Here, here, my early, my only love, I feel, in spite of myself, that I never utterly, fully adored you until now!"

CHAPTER XLI.

LUCILLA.—THE SOLITUDE.—THE SPELL.—THE DREAM AND THE RESOLVE.

While the above events, so fatal to Lucilla, were in progress at Rome, she was holding an unquiet commune with her own passionate and restless heart by the borders of the lake, whose silver quiet mocked the mind it had, in happier moments, reflected. She had

now dragged on the weary load of time throughout the winter; and the early and soft spring was already abroad, smoothing the face of the waters, and calling life into the boughs. Hitherto this time of the year had possessed a mysterious and earnest attraction for Lucilla—now all its voices were mute. The letters that Godolphin had written to her were so few and so restrained, in comparison with those which she had received in the former periods of absence, that—ever alive as she was to impulse, and unregulated by settled principles of hope—her only relief to a tearful and spiritless dejection was in paroxysms of doubt, jealousy, and despair.

It is the most common thing in the world, that, when we have once wronged a person, we go on in the wrong, from a certain soreness with which conscience links the associations of the injured party. And thus Godolphin, struggling with the return to his early and never-forgotten love, felt an unwillingness that he could seldom successfully combat in playing the hypocrite to Lucilla. His very remorse made him unkind; the feeling that he ought to write often made him write seldom; and, conscious that he ought to return her expressions of eager devotion, he returned them with involuntary awkwardness and reserve. All this is very natural and very evident to us; but a thousand mysteries were more acceptable to, more sought for and clung to by Lucilla, than a conjecture at the truth.

Meanwhile, she fed more and more eagerly on those vain researches which yet beguiled her time and flattered her imagination. In a science so false and so unprofitable, it mattered, happily, little whether or not the poor disciple laboured with success; but I need scarcely tell to any who have had the curiosity to look over the entangled schemes and quaint figures of the art, how slender was the advancement of the daughter in the learning of the sire. Still it was a comfort and a soothing even to look upon the placid heaven, and form a conjecture as to the language of its stars. And,

above all, while she questioned the future, she thought only of her lover. But day after day passed—no letter, or worse than none; and at length Lucilla became utterly impatient of all rest: a nervous fever possessed her; the extreme solitude of the place filled her with that ineffable sensation of irritability which, I have somewhere read, preludes the madness that has been produced in criminals by solitary confinement.

On the day that she wrote that letter to Godolphin which I have transcribed, this painful tension of the nerves was more than hitherto acute. She longed to fly somewhere; nay, once or twice she remembered that Rome was easily gained; that she might be there as expeditiously as her letter. Although in that letter only we have signified that Lucilla had expressed her wish for Godolphin's return, yet in all her later letters she had (although, perhaps, more timidly) urged that desire. But they had not taken the same hold with Godolphin; nor, while he was playing with his danger, had they produced the same energetic resolution. Lucilla could not, however, hope with much reason that the success of her present letter would be greater than that of her former ones; and, at all events, she did not anticipate an *immediate* compliance with her prayers. She looked forward to some excuses and to some delay. We cannot, therefore, wonder that she felt a growing desire to follow her own epistle to Rome; and although she had been prevented before, and still drew back from absolutely favouring and enforcing the idea by the fear of Godolphin's displeasure, yet she trusted enough to his gentleness of character to feel sure that the displeasure could scarcely be lasting. Still the step was bold, and Lucilla loved devotedly enough to be timid; and, besides, her inexperience made her look upon the journey as a far more formidable expedition than it really was.

Debating the notion in her mind, she sought her usual retreat, and turned listlessly over the books which she had so lately loved to study. At length, in moving one she had not looked into before, a paper fell to the

ground; she picked it up; it was the paper containing that figure which, it will be remembered, the astrologer had shown to his daughter as a charm to produce dreams prophetic of any circumstance or person concerning whom the believer might be anxious to learn aught. As she saw the image, which, the reader will recollect, was of a remarkable design, the whole of her conversation with Volktman on the subject rushed into her mind, and she resolved that very night to prove the efficacy of the charm on which he had so confidently insisted. Fraught with the chimerical delusion, she now longed for the hours to pass and the night to come. She looked again and again at the singular image and the portentous figures wrought upon the charm; the very strangeness of the characters inspired her, as was natural, with a belief in their efficacy; and she felt a thrill, an awe, creep over her blood, as the shadows of eve, deepening over the far mountains, brought on the time of trial. At length it was night, and Lucilla sought her chamber.

The hour was exceedingly serene, and the stars shone through the casement with a lustre that to her seemed weird and ominous. With bare feet, and only in her night-robe, she stole tremblingly across the threshold. She paused for a moment at the window, and looked out on the deep and quiet night; and as she so stood, it was a picture that, had I been a painter, I would have devoted a youth to accomplish. Half in light, half in shadow, her undress gave the outline, and somewhat more, of a throat and breast, whose roundness, shape, and hue never were surpassed. Her arms were lightly crossed above her bosom; and her long, rich hair, seeming darker by that light, fell profusely, yet not dishevelled, around her neck, parting from her brow. Her attitude at that moment was quite still, as if in worship, and perhaps it was; her face was inclined slightly upward, looking to the heavens and towards Rome. But that face—*there* was the picture! It was so young, so infantine, so modest; and yet the youth and the timidity were elevated and re-

fined by the earnest doubt, the preternatural terror, the unearthly hope, which dwelt upon her forehead, her parted lip, and her wistful and kindled eye. There was a sublimity in her loneliness and her years, and in the fond and vain superstition, which was but a spirit called from the deeps of an unfathomable and mighty love. And afar was heard the breaking of the lake upon the shore—no other sound! And now, among the unwaving pines, there was a silver shimmer as the moon rose into her empire, and deepened at once, along the universal scene, the loveliness and the awe.

Lucilla turned from the window, and, kneeling down, wrote with a trembling hand upon the figure one word —the name of Godolphin. She then placed it under her pillow, and the spell was concluded. The astrologer had told her of the necessary co-operation which the mind must afford to the charm; but it will easily be believed that Lucilla required no injunction to let her imagination dwell upon the vision she expected to invoke. And it would have been almost strange if, so intently and earnestly brooding as she had done over the image of Godolphin, that image had not, without recurring to any cabalistical spells, been present to her dreams.

She thought that it was broad noonday, and that she was sitting alone in the house she then inhabited, and weeping bitterly. Of a sudden the voice of Godolphin called to her; she ran eagerly forth, but no sooner had she passed the threshold than the scene so familiar to her vanished, and she was alone in an immense and pathless wilderness; there was no tree and no water in this desert; all was arid, solitary, and inanimate. But what seemed *most* strange to her was, that in the heavens, although they were clear and bright, there was neither sun nor stars; the light seemed settled and stagnant—there was in it no life.

And she thought that she continued to move involuntarily along the waste; and that, ever and anon, she yearned and strove to rest, but her limbs did not obey her will, and a power she could not control urged her onward.

And now there was no longer an utter dumbness and death over the scene. Forth from the sands, as from the bowels of the reluctant earth, there crept, one by one, loathly and reptile shapes; obscene sounds rang in her ears—now in a hideous mockery, now in a yet more sickening solicitation. Shapes of terror thickened and crowded round her. She was roused by dread into action; she hurried faster and faster; she strove to escape; and ever, as she fled, the sounds grew louder and the persecuting shapes more ghastly; abominations which her pure mind shuddered to behold presented themselves at every turn: there was no spot for refuge, no cave for concealment. Wearied and despairing, she stopped short; but then the shapes and sounds seemed gradually to lose their terror; her eye and ear became familiar to them; and what at first seemed foes, grew into companions.

And now, again, the wilderness was gone; she stood in a strange spot, and opposite, and gazing upon her with intent and mournful eyes, stood Godolphin. But he seemed much older than he was, and the traces of care were ploughed deeply on his countenance; and above them both hung a motionless and livid cloud; and from the cloud a gigantic hand was stretched forth, pointing with a shadowy and unmoving finger towards a quarter of the earth which was enveloped in a thick gloom. While she sought, with straining eyes, to penetrate the darkness of the spot thus fearfully marked out, she thought Godolphin vanished, and all was sudden and utter night—night, but not stillness—for there was a roar as of many winds, and a dashing of angry waters, that seemed close beneath; and she heard the trees groan and bend, and felt the icy and rushing air: the tempests were abroad. But, amid the mingling of the mighty sounds, she heard distinctly the ringing of a horse's hoofs; and presently a wild cry, in which she recognised the voice of Godolphin, rang forth, adding to the wrath of nature the yet more appalling witness of a human despair. The cry was followed by the louder dashing of the waves and the

fiercer turmoil of the winds; and then, her anguish and horror freeing her from the Prison of Sleep, she woke.

It was nearly day, but the serenity of the late night had gone; the rain fell in torrents, and the house shook beneath the fury of a violent storm. This change in the mood of nature had probably influenced the latter part of her dream. But Lucilla thought of no natural solution to the dreadful vision she had undergone. Her superstition was confirmed and ratified by the intense impression wrought upon her mind by the dream. A thousand unutterable fears—fears for Godolphin rather than herself—or if for herself, only in connexion with him—bore irresistible despotism over her thoughts. She could not bear to wait, to linger any longer in the dark and agitated suspense she herself had created; the idea she before had nursed now became resolve; she determined forthwith to set out to Rome—to see Godolphin. She rose, woke her attendant, and that very day she put her resolution into effect.

CHAPTER XLII.

JOY AND DESPAIR.

It was approaching towards the evening as Lucilla paused for a few seconds at the door which led to Godolphin's apartments. At length she summoned courage. The servant who admitted her was Godolphin's favourite domestic; and he was amazed, but overjoyed, to see her; for Lucilla was the idol of all who knew her, save of him whose love she only cared and lived for.

His master, he said, was gone out for a short time, but the next day they were to have returned home.

Lucilla coloured with vivid delight to hear that her letter had produced an effect she had not hoped so expeditiously to accomplish. She passed on into Godolphin's apartment. The room bore evident signs of approaching departure; the trunks lay half packed on the floor; there was all that importance of confusion around which makes to the amateur traveller a luxury out of discomfort. Lucilla sat down, and waited, anxious and trembling, for her lover. Her woman, who had accompanied her, thinking of more terrestrial concerns than love, left her at her desire. She could not rest long; she walked, agitated and expecting, to and fro the long and half-furnished chamber which characterizes the Italian palace. At length her eye fell on an open letter on a writing-table at one corner of the room. She glanced over it mechanically; certain words suddenly arrested her attention: were those words—words of passion—addressed to her? If not, oh Heaven! to whom? She obeyed, as she ever did, the impulse of the moment, and read what follows:

"CONSTANCE!—As I write that word how many remembrances rush upon me! for how many years has that name been a talisman to my heart, waking its emotions at will! You are the first woman I ever really loved: you rejected me, yet I could not disdain you. You became another's, but my love could not desert you. Your hand wrote the history of my life after the period when we met; my habits—my thoughts—you influenced and coloured them all! And now, Constance, you are free, and I love you more fervently than ever! And *you*—yes, you would not reject me now; you have grown wiser, and learned the value of a heart. And yet the same Fate that divided us hitherto will divide us now; all obstacles but one are passed away; of that one you shall hear and judge.

"When we parted, Constance, years ago, I did not submit tamely to the burning remembrance you bequeathed me; I sought to dissipate your image, and,

by wooing others, to forget yourself. Need I say, that to know another was only to remember you the more? But among the other and far less worthy objects of my pursuit was one whom, had I not seen you first, I might have loved as ardently as I do you; and in the first flush of emotion and the heat of sudden events, I imagined that I *did* so love her. She was an orphan, a child in years and in the world; and I was all to her—I *am* all to her. She is not mine by the ties of the church, but I have pledged a faith to her equally sacred and as strong. Shall I break that faith? shall I betray that trust? shall I crush a heart that has always been mine —mine more tenderly than yours, rich in a thousand gifts and resources, ever was or ever can be? Shall I —sworn to protect her—I, who have already robbed her of fame and friends, rob her now of father, brother, lover, husband, the world itself—for I am all to her? Never—never! I shall be wretched throughout life: I shall know that you are free; that you—oh, Constance! *you* might be mine! but she shall never dream what she has cost me! I have been too cold, too ungrateful to her already; I will make her amends. My heart may break in the effort, but it shall reward her. You, Constance, in the pride of your lofty station, your strengthened mind, your regulated virtue (fenced in by the hundred barriers of custom)—you cannot, perhaps, conceive how pure and devoted the soul of this poor girl is! She is not one whom I could heap riches upon and leave: my love is all the riches she knows. Earth has not a consolation or a recompense for the loss of my affection: and even heaven itself she has never learned to think of, except as a place in which we shall be united for ever. As I write this I know that she is sitting afar off and alone, and thinking only of one whose whole soul, fated and accursed as he is, is maddened by the love of another. My letters, her only comfort, have been cold and few of late: I know how they have wrung her heart: I picture to myself her solitude, her sadness, her unfriended youth, her ardent mind, which, not enriched by culture, clings,

feeds, lives only on one idea. Before you receive this I shall be on the road to her. Never again will I risk the temptation I have undergone. I am not a vain man; I do not deceive myself; I do not imagine, I do not insult you by believing that you will long or bitterly feel my loss. I have loved you far better than you have loved me, and you have uncounted channels for your bright hopes and your various ambition. You love the world, and the world is at your feet! And, in remembering me now, you may think you have cause for indignation. Why, with the knowledge of a tie that forbade me to hope for you, why did I linger round you? why did I give vent to any word, or license to any look, that told you I loved you still? Why, above all, on that fated yesterday, when we stood alone, surrounded by the waters, why did I dare forget myself—why clasp you to my breast—why utter the assurance of that love which was a mockery, if I were not about solemnly to record it?

"This you will ask; and, if you are not satisfied with the answer, your pride will clothe my memory with resentment. Be it so—yet hear me! Constance, when, in my first youth, at the time when the wax was yet soft and the tree might yet be bent—when I laid my heart and my future lot at your feet—when you, at the dictates of a worldly and cold ambition (disguise the name as you will, the reality is the same), threw me back on the solitary desert of life—when you rejected, forsook me, do you think that, although I loved you still, there was no anger mingled with the love! We met again: but what years of wasted existence—of dimmed hope—of deadened emotion—had passed over me since then! And who had thus marked them? You! Do you wonder, then, that something of human pride asked for human vengeance? Yes! I pined for some triumph in my turn: I longed to try whether I was yet forgotten; whether the heart which stung me had been stung also in the wound that it inflicted. Was not this natural? Ask yourself, and blame me if you can. But, by degrees, as I gazed on a beauty and

listened to a voice softer in their character than of old —as I felt that you would not deny me retribution, this selfish desire for revenge died away, and, by degrees, all emotions merged in one—unconquered, unconquerable love. And can you blame me if then—traitor to myself as to you—I lingered on the spot? if I had many struggles to endure before I could resolve on the sacrifice I now make? Alas! it has cost me much to be just. Can you blame me if at all times I could not control my words and looks? Nay, even in our last meeting, when I was maddened by the thought that we were about to part for ever—when we stood alone—when no eye was near—when you clung to me with a delicious timidity—when your breath was on my cheek —when the heaving of your heart was heard by mine —when my hand touched that which could give me all the world in itself—when my arm encircled that glorious and divine shape—oh Heaven! can you blame me—can you wonder if I was transported beside myself; if conscience, reason, all were forgotten, and I thought, felt, lived but for the moment and for you? No, you will feel for the weakness of nature; you will not judge me harshly.

"And why should you rob me of the remembrance of that brief moment, that wild embrace? How often shall I recall it! How often, when the light step of her to whom I return glides around me, shall I cheat myself and think it yours: when I feel her breath at night, shall I not start and dream it comes from your lips? and, in returning her unconscious caress, let me—let me fancy it is you who whisper me the assurances of unutterable love! Forgive me, Constance, my yet adored Constance, whom I shall never see more, for these wild words, this momentary weakness. Farewell! Whatever becomes of me, may God give you all his blessings!

"One word more—no, I will not close this letter yet! You remember that you once gave me a flower —years ago. I have preserved its leaves to this day; but I will give no indulgence to a folly that will now

wrong you and be unworthy of myself. I will send you back those leaves: let them plead for me as the memories of former days. I must break off now, for I can literally write no more. I must go forth and recover my self-command. And oh! may she whom I seek to-morrow—whose unsuspecting heart, admonished by temptation, I will watch over, guide, and shield, far, far more zealously than I have yet done—never know what it has cost me not to abandon and betray her."

And Lucilla read over every word of this letter! How wholly impossible it is for language to express the agony, the hopeless, irremediable despair, that deepened within her as she proceeded to the end! Everything that life had or could ever have had for her of common peace or joy, was blasted for ever! As she came to the last word, she bowed her head in silence over the writing, and felt as if some mighty rock had fallen upon her heart and crushed it to dust. Had the letter breathed but one unkind, one slighting expression of her, it would have been some comfort, some rallying point, however forlorn and wretched; but this cruel tenderness—this bitter generosity!

And, before she had read that letter, how joyously, how breathlessly she had anticipated rushing to her lover's breast! It seems incredible that the space of a few minutes should suffice to blight a whole existence —blacken, without a ray of hope, an entire future!

She was aroused by the sound of steps, though in another apartment; she would not now have met Godolphin for worlds; the thought of his return alone gave her the power of motion. She thrust the fatal letter into her bosom; and then, in characters surprisingly distinct and clear, she wrote her name, and placed that writing in the stead of the epistle she took away. She judged rightly, that that single name would suffice to say all she could not then say. Having done this, she rose, left the room, and stole softly and unperceived into the open street.

Unconscious and careless whither she went, she hurried on, her eyes bent upon the ground, and concealing her form and face with her long mantle. The streets at Rome are not thronged as with us; nor does there exist, in a city consecrated by so many sublime objects, that restless and vulgar curiosity which torments the English public. Each lives in himself, not in his neighbour; the moral air of Rome is Indifference.

Lucilla, therefore, hurried along, unmolested and unobserved, until at length her feet failed her, and she sank exhausted, but still unconscious of her movements and of all around, upon one of the scattered fragments of ancient pride that at every turn are visible in the streets of Rome. The place was quiet and solitary, and darkened by the shadows of a palace that reared itself close beside. She sat down; and, shrouding her face as it drooped upon her breast, endeavoured to collect her thoughts. Presently the sound of a guitar was heard; and along the street came a little group of the itinerant musicians who invest modern Italy with its yet living air of poetry: the reality is gone, but the spirit lingers. They stopped opposite a small house; and Lucilla, looking up, saw the figure of a young girl placing a light at the window as a signal well known, and then she glided away. Meanwhile, the lover (who had accompanied the musicians, and seemed in no very elevated rank of life) stood bareheaded beneath; and in his upward look there was a devotion, a fondness, a respect, that brought back to Lucilla all the unsparing bitterness of contrast and recollection. And now the serenade began. The air was inexpressibly soft and touching, and the words were steeped in that vague melancholy which is inseparable from the tenderness, if not from the passion of love. Lucilla listened involuntarily, and the charm slowly wrought its effect. The hardness and confusion of her mind melted gradually away, and, as the song ended, she turned aside and burst into tears: "Happy, happy girl!" she murmured; "she is loved!"

Here let us drop the curtain upon Lucilla. Often, oh reader! shalt thou recall this picture; often shalt thou see her before thee—alone and broken-hearted—weeping in the twilight streets of Rome!

CHAPTER XLIII.

LOVE STRONG AS DEATH, AND NOT LESS BITTER.

When Godolphin returned home the door was open, as Lucilla had left it, and he went at once into his apartment. He hastened to the table on which he had left, with the negligence arising from the emotions of the moment, the letter to Constance; the paper on which Lucilla had written her name alone met his eye. While yet stunned and amazed, his servant and Lucilla's entered: in a few moments he learned all they had to tell him; the rest Lucilla's handwriting did, indeed, sufficiently explain. He comprehended all; and, in a paroxysm of alarm and remorse, he dispersed his servants, and hurried himself in search of her. He went to the house of her relations; they had not seen or heard of her. It was now night, and every obstacle in the way of his search presented itself. Not a clew could be traced; or, sometimes following a description that seemed characteristic, he chased, and found some wanderer—how unlike Lucilla! Towards daybreak he returned home, after a vain and weary search; and his only comfort was in learning from her attendant that she had about her a sum of money which he knew would in Italy always purchase safety and attention. Yet alone at night in the streets—so utter a stranger as she was to the world—so young and so lovely—he shuddered, he gasped for breath at the idea. Might she destroy herself? That hideous question forced itself upon him; he could not exclude it: he trembled

when he recalled her impassioned and keen temper; and when, in remembering the tone and words of his letter to Constance, he felt how desperate a pang every sentence must have inflicted upon her. And, indeed, even his imagination could not equal the truth, when it attempted to sound the depths of her wounded feelings. He only returned home to sally out again. He now employed the police, and those most active and vigilant agents that at Rome are willing to undertake all enterprises with diligence—he could not but feel assured of discovering her.

Still, however, noon—evening came on, and no tidings. As he once more returned home, in the faint hope that some intelligence might await him there, his servant hurried eagerly out to him with a letter: it was from Lucilla, and it was worthy of her: I give it to the reader.

LUCILLA'S LETTER.

"I have read your letter to another! Are not these words sufficient to tell you all? All? no! you never, never, never can tell how crushed and broken my heart is. Why? Because you are a man, and because you have never loved as I loved. Yes, Godolphin, I knew that I was not one whom you *could* love. I am a poor, ignorant, untutored girl, with nothing at my heart but a great world of love which I could never tell. Thou saidst I could not comprehend *thee*: alas! how much was there—is there—in *my* nature, in *my* feelings, which have been, and ever will be, unfathomable to thy sight!

"But all this matters not; the tie between us is eternally broken. Go, dear, dear Godolphin! link thyself to that happier other one, seemingly so much more thine equal than the lowly and uncultivated Lucilla. Grieve not for me; you have been kind, most kind to me. You have taken away hope, but you have given me pride in its stead; the blow which has crushed my heart has given strength to my mind. Were you and I left alone on the earth, we must still be apart; I could

never, never live with you again; my world is not your world; when our hearts have ceased to be in common, what of union is there left to us? Yet it would be something if, since the future is shut out from me, you had not also deprived me of the past. I have not even the privilege of looking back! What! all the while my heart was lavishing itself upon thee—all the while I had no other thought, no other dream but thee—all the while I sat by thy side, and watched thee, hanging on thy wish, striving to foresee thy thoughts—all the while I was the partner of thy days, and at night my bosom was thy pillow, and I could not sleep from the bliss of thinking thee so near me—*thy* heart was then, indeed, away from me; *thy* thoughts estranged; I was to *thee* only an encumbrance, a burden, from which *thy* sigh was to be free! Can I ever look back, then, to those hours we spent together? All that vast history of the past is but one record of bitterness and shame. And yet I cannot blame thee; it were something if I could: in proportion as you loved me not, you were kind and generous—and God will bless you for that kindness to the poor orphan. A harsh word, a threatening glance, I never had the affliction to feel from thee. Tracing the blighted past, I am only left to sadden at that gentleness which never came from love!

"Go, Godolphin: I repeat the prayer in all humbleness and sincerity. Go to her whom thou lovest, perhaps as I loved thee; go, and in your happiness I shall feel at last something of happiness myself. We part for ever, but there is no unkindness between us; there is no reproach that one can make against the other. If I have sinned, it has been against Heaven and not thee; and thou—why, even against Heaven *mine* was *all* the fault, the rashness, the madness! You will return to your native land; to that proud England, of which I have so often questioned you, and which, even in your answers, seems to me so cold and desolate a spot—a land so hostile to love. There, in your new ties, you will learn new objects, and you will be too busy and too happy for your thoughts to turn to me

again. Too happy? No, I wish I could think you would be; but I, whom you deny to possess sympathies with you—I have at least penetrated so far into your heart as to fear that, come what may, you will never find the happiness you ask. You exact too much, you dream too fondly not to be discontented with the truth. What has happened to me must happen to my rival—will happen to you throughout life. Your being is in one world, your soul is in another. Alas! how foolishly I run on, as if seeking in your nature, and not circumstances, the blow that separates us.

"I shall hasten to a conclusion. I have gained a refuge in this convent; seek me not, follow me not, I implore, I adjure thee; it can serve no purpose. I would not see thee; the veil is already drawn between thy world and me, and it only remains, in kindness and in charity, to bid each other farewell. Farewell, then! I think I am now with thee; I think my lips have breathed aside thy long hair, and cling to thy fair temples with a sister's—that word, at least, is left me—a *sister's* kiss. As we stood together at the gray dawn when we last parted—as then, in sorrow and in tears, I hid my face in thy bosom—as then, unconscious of what was to come, I poured forth *my* assurances of faithful, unswerving thought—as thrice thou torest thyself from me and didst thrice return—and as, through the comfortless mists of morn, I gazed after thee, and fancied for hours that thy last words yet rang in my ear, so now, but with different feelings, I once more bid thee farewell—farewell for ever!"

CHAPTER XLIV.

GODOLPHIN.

"No, signor, she will not see you!"

"You have given my note—given that ring?"

"I have, and she still refuses."

"Refuses! And is that all the answer? No line to—to soften the reply?"

"Signor, I have spoken all my message."

"Cruel, hard-hearted! May I call again, think you, with a better success?"

"The convent, at stated times, is open to strangers, signor; but, so far as the young signora is concerned, I feel assured, from her manner, that your visits will be in vain."

"Ay, ay, I understand you, madam; you wish to entice her from the wicked world; to suffer not human friendships to disturb her thoughts. Good heavens! and can she, so young, so ardent, dream of taking the veil!"

"She does not dream of it," said the nun, coolly; "she has no intention of remaining here long."

"Befriend me, I beseech you!" cried Godolphin, eagerly: "restore her to me: let me only come once to her within these walls, and I will enrich your—"

"Signor, good-day."

Dejected, melancholy, and yet enraged amid all his sorrow, Godolphin returned to Rome. Lucilla's letter rankled in his heart like the barb of a broken arrow; but the stern resolve with which she had refused to see him appeared to the pride that belongs to manhood a harsh and unfeeling insult. He knew not that poor Lucilla's eyes had watched him from the walls of the convent; and that while, for his sake more than her own, she had refused the meeting he prayed for, she

had not the resolution to deny herself the luxury of gazing on him once more.

He reached Rome: he found a note on his table from Lady Charlotte Deerham, saying she had heard it was his intention to leave Rome, and begging him to receive from her that evening her *adieux*. "Lady Erpingham will be with me," concluded the note.

This brought a new train of ideas. Since Lucilla's flight, all thought but of Lucilla had been expelled from Godolphin's mind. We have seen how his letter to Lady Erpingham miscarried: he had written no other. How strange to Constance must seem his conduct, after the scene of the avowal in the Siren's Cave: no excuse on the one hand, no explanation on the other; and now what explanation *should* he give! There was no longer a necessity, for it was no longer honesty and justice to fly from the bliss that might await him—the love of his early-worshipped Constance. But could he, with a heart yet bleeding from the violent rupture of one tie, form a new one? Agitated, restless, self-reproachful, bewildered, and uncertain, he could not bear thoughts that demanded answers to a thousand questions; he flung from his cheerless room, and hastened, with a feverish pulse and burning temples, to Lady Charlotte Deerham's.

"Good God! how ill you look, Mr. Godolphin!" cried the hostess, involuntarily.

"Ill! ha, ha! I never was better; but I have just returned from a long journey: I have not touched food nor felt sleep for three days and nights. I! ha, ha! no, I'm not ill;" and with an eye bright with gathering delirium, Godolphin glared around him.

Lady Charlotte drew back and shuddered: Godolphin felt a cool, soft hand laid on his; he turned, and the face of Constance, full of anxious and wondering pity, was bent upon him. He stood arrested for one moment, and then seizing that hand, pressed it to his lips, his heart, and burst suddenly into tears. That paroxysm saved his life; for days afterward he was insensible.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE DECLARATION.—THE APPROACHING NUPTIALS.—IS THE IDEALIST CONTENTED?

As Godolphin returned to health, and, day after day, the presence of Constance, her soft tones, her deep eyes, grew on him, renewing their ancient spells, the reader must perceive that bourne to which events necessarily tended. For some weeks not a word that alluded to the Siren's Cave was uttered by either; but when that allusion came at last from Godolphin's lips, the next moment he was kneeling beside Constance, her hand surrendered to his, and her proud cheek all bathed in the blushes of sixteen.

"And so," said Saville, "you, Percy Godolphin, are at last the accepted lover of Constance countess of Erpingham. When is the wedding to be?"

"I know not," said Godolphin, musingly.

"Well, I almost envy you; you will be very happy for six weeks, and that's something in this disagreeable world. Yet, now I look on you, I grow reconciled to myself again; you do not seem so happy as that I, Augustus Saville, should envy you while my digestion lasts. What are you thinking of?"

"Nothing," replied Godolphin, vacantly; the words of Lucilla were weighing at his heart, like a prophecy working towards its fulfilment; "*Come what may, you will never find the happiness you ask: you exact too much.*"

At that moment Lady Erpingham's page entered with a note from Constance and a present of flowers. No one ever wrote half so beautifully, so spiritually as Constance; and to Percy the wit was so intermingled with the tenderness!

"No," said he, burying his lips among the flowers,

"no! I discard the foreboding; with you I must be happy!" But conscience, still unsilenced, whispered *Lucilla!*

The marriage was to take place at Rome. The day was fixed; and, owing to Constance's rank, beauty, and celebrity, the news of the event created throughout "the English in Italy" no small sensation. There was a great deal of gossip, of course, on the occasion; and some of this gossip found its way to the haughty ears of Constance. It was said that she had made a strange match; that it was a curious weakness in one so proud and brilliant, to look no loftier than a private and not very wealthy gentleman; handsome, indeed, and reputed clever, but one who had never *distinguished himself* in anything—who never would!

Constance was alarmed and stung, not at the vulgar accusation, the paltry sneer, but at the prophecy relating to Godolphin: "he had never distinguished himself in anything—he never would." Rank, wealth, power, Constance felt these she wanted not, these she could command of herself; but she felt also that a nobler vanity of her nature required that the man of her mature and second choice should not be one, in repute, of that mere herd, above whom, in reality, his genius so eminently exalted him. She felt it essential to her future happiness that Godolphin's ambition should be aroused; that he should share her ardour for those great objects that she felt would for ever be dear to her.

"I love Rome!" said she, passionately, one day, as, accompanied by Godolphin, she left the Vatican; "I feel my soul grow larger amid its ruins. Elsewhere, through Italy, we live in the present, but here in the past."

"Say not that that is the better life, dear Constance; the present—can we surpass it?"

Constance blushed, and thanked her lover with a look that told him he was understood.

"Yet," said she, returning to the subject, "who can breathe the air that is rife with glory, and not be intoxicated with emulation? Ah, Percy!"

"Ah, Constance! and what wouldst thou have of me? Is it not glory enough to be thy lover?"

"Let the world be as proud of my choice as I am."

Godolphin frowned; he penetrated in those words to Constance's secret meaning. Accustomed to be an idol from his boyhood, he resented the notion that he had need of exertion to render him worthy even of Constance; and sensible that it might be thought he had made an alliance beyond his just pretensions, he was doubly tenacious as to his own claims. Godolphin frowned, then, and turned away in silence. Constance sighed; she felt that she might not renew the subject. But, after a pause, Godolphin himself continued it.

"Constance," said he, in a low, firm voice, "let us understand each other. You are all to me in the world—fame, and honour, and station, and happiness. Am I, also, that all to you? If there be any thought at your heart which whispers you, 'you might have served your ambition better; you have done wrong in yielding to love, and love only,' then, Constance, pause; it is not too late."

"Do I deserve this, Percy?"

"You drop words sometimes," answered Godolphin, "that seem to indicate that you think the world may cavil at your choice, and that some exertion on *my* part is necessary to maintain *your* dignity. Constance, need I say, again and again, that I adore the very dust you tread on? But I have a pride, a self-respect, beneath which I cannot stoop; if you really think or feel this, I will not condescend to receive even happiness from you: let us part."

Constance saw his lips white and quivering as he spoke; her heart smote her, her pride vanished; she sank on his shoulder, and forgot even ambition; nay, while she inly murmured at his sentiment, she felt it breathed a sort of nobility that she could not but esteem. She strove, then, to lull to rest all her more worldly anxieties for the future; to hope that, cast on the exciting stage of English ambition, Godolphin

must necessarily be stirred despite of his creed; and if she sometimes doubted, sometimes despaired of this, she felt at least that his presence had become dearer to her than all things. Nay, she checked her own enthusiasm, her own worship of fame, since they clashed with his opinions; so marvellously and insensibly had Love bowed down the proud energies and the lofty soul of the daughter of John Vernon.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE BRIDALS.—THE ACCIDENT.—THE FIRST LAWFUL POSSESSION OF LOVE.

It was the morning on which Constance and Godolphin were to be married; it had been settled that they were to proceed the same day towards Florence; and Constance was at her toilet when her woman laid beside her a large bouquet of flowers.

"From Percy—from Mr. Godolphin, I mean?" she asked, taking them up.

"No, my lady; a young woman outside the palace gave them me, and bade me, in such pretty English, be sure to give them to your ladyship; and when I offered her money, she would not take anything, my lady."

"The Italians are a courteous people," replied Constance; and she placed the flowers in her bosom.

As, after the ceremony, Godolphin assisted his bride into the carriage, a girl, wrapped in a large cloak, pressed forward for a moment. Godolphin had in that moment turned his head to give some order to his servant, and with the next the girl had sunk back into the throng that was drawn around the carriage, yet not before Constance had heard her murmur in a deep, admiring, yet sorrowful tone, "Beautiful! *how* beautiful! Ah me!"

"Did you observe what beautiful eyes that young girl had?" asked Constance, as the carriage whirled off.

"What girl? I saw nothing but you!"

"Hark! there is a noise behind."

Godolphin looked out; the crowd seemed collected round one person.

"Only a young woman fainted, sir!" said his servant, seated behind. "She fell down in a fit just before the horses; but they started aside, and did not hurt her."

"That is fortunate!" said Godolphin, reseating himself by his new bride; "drive on faster."

At Florence, Godolphin revealed to Constance the outline of Lucilla's history, and Constance shared somewhat of the feelings with which he told it.

"I left," said he, "in the hands of the abbess, a sum to be entirely at Lucilla's control, whether she stay in the convent or not, and which will always secure to her an independence. But I confess I should like now once more to visit the convent, and learn on what fate she has decided."

"You would do well, dear Percy," replied Constance, who from her high and starred sphere could form even no dream of jealousy; "indeed, I think you could do no less."

And Godolphin covered those generous lips with the sweet kisses in which esteem begins to mingle with passion. What has the earth like that first fresh union of two hearts long separated and now blended for ever! However close the sympathy between woman and her lover—however each thinks to have learned the other—what a world is there left *un*learned, until marriage brings all those charming confidences, that holy and sweet intercourse, which leave no separate interest, no undivided thought! But there is one thing that distinguishes the conversation of young married people from that of lovers on a less sacred footing—*they talk of the future!* Other lovers talk rather of the past; an uncertainty pervades *their* hereafter; they feel, they recoil from it; they are sensible that their plans are not

one and indivisible. But married people are always laying out the "TO COME;" always talking over their plans: this often takes something away from the tenderness of affection, but how much it adds to its enjoyment!

Seated by each other, and looking on the silver Arno, Godolphin and Constance, hand clasped in hand, surrendered themselves to the contemplation of their future happiness. "And what would be your favourite mode of life, dear Percy?"

"Why, I have now no schemings left me, Constance. With you obtained, I have grown a dullard, and left off dreaming. But let me see: a house in England—*you* like England—some ten or twenty miles from the great Babel: books, pictures, statues, and old trees that shall put us in mind of our Norman fathers who planted them; above all, a noisy, clear, sunny stream gliding amid them; deer on the opposite bank, half hidden among the fern; and rooks over head: a privilege for eccentricity that would allow one to be social or solitary as one pleased; and a house so full of guests, that to shun them *all* now and then would be no affront to *one*."

"Well," said Constance, smiling, "go on."

"I have finished."

"Finished!"

"Yes, my fair Insatiable! What more would you have?"

"Why, this is but a country life you have been talking of; very well in its way for three months in the year."

"Italy, then, for the other nine," returned Godolphin.

"Ah, Percy! is pleasure, mere pleasure, vulgar pleasure, to be really the sole end and aim of life?"

"Assuredly!"

"And action, enterprise—are these as nothing?"

Godolphin was silent, but began absently to throw pebbles into the water. The action reminded Constance of the first time she had ever seen him among his ancestral groves; and she sighed as she now gazed

on a brow from which the effeminacy and dreaming of his life had banished much of its early chivalric and earnest expression.

CHAPTER XLVII.

NEWS OF LUCILLA.

GODOLPHIN was about one morning to depart for the convent to which Lucilla had flown, when a letter was brought to him from the abbess of the convent herself: it had followed him from Rome. Lucilla had left her retreat: left it three days before Godolphin's marriage; the abbess knew not whither, but believed she intended to reside in Rome. She enclosed him a note from Lucilla, left for him before her departure. Short but characteristic, it ran thus:

LUCILLA TO GODOLPHIN.

"I can stay here no longer; my mind will not submit to quiet; this inactivity wears me to madness. Besides, I want to see thy wife. I shall go to Rome; I shall witness thy wedding; and then—ah! what then? Give me back, Godolphin, oh, give me back the young pure heart I had ere I loved you! Then I could take joy in all things: *now!* But I will not repine; it is beneath me. I, the daughter of the stars, am no love-sick and nerveless minion of a vain regret; my pride is roused at last, and I feel at least the independence of being alone. Wild and roving shall be my future life; that lot which denies me hope has raised me above all fear. Love makes us all the woman; love has left me, and something hard and venturous, something that belongs to *thy* sex, has come in its stead.

"You have left me money—I thank you—I thank

you—I thank you; my heart almost chokes me as I write this. Could you think of me so basely? For shame, man! If my child—*our* child were living (and oh, Percy, she had thine eyes!), I would see her starve inch by inch rather than touch one doit of thy *bounty!* But she is dead—thank God! Fear not for me, I shall not starve; these hands can support life. God bless thee—loved as thou still art! If, years hence, I should feel my end draw near, I will drag myself to thy country, and look once more on thy face before I die."

Godolphin sunk down and covered his face with his hands. Constance took up the letter. "Ay—read it!" said he, in a hollow voice. She did so: and when she had finished, the proud Constance, struck by a spirit like her own, bathed the letter in her tears. This pleased, this touched, this consoled Godolphin more than the most elaborate comfortings.

"Poor girl!" said Constance, through her tears, "this must not be; she must not be left on the wide world to her own despairing heart. Let us both go to Rome and seek her out. *I* will persuade her to accept what she refuses from you."

Godolphin pressed his wife's hand, but spoke not. They went that day to Rome. Lucilla had departed for Leghorn, and thence taken her passage in a vessel bound to the northern coasts of Europe. Perhaps she had sought her father's land? With that hope, in the absence of all others, they attempted to console themselves.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

IN WHICH TWO PERSONS, PERMANENTLY UNITED, DISCOVER THAT NO TIE CAN PRODUCE UNION OF MINDS.

Weeks passed on, and apparently Godolphin had reconciled himself to the disappearance and precarious destiny of Lucilla. It was not in his calm and brooding nature to show much of emotion; but there was often, even in the presence of Constance, a cloud on his brow, and the fits of abstraction to which he had always been accustomed grew upon him more frequently than ever. Constance had been inured for years to the most assiduous, the most devoted attentions; and now, living much alone with Godolphin, she began somewhat to miss them; for Godolphin could be a passionate, a romantic, but he could not be a very watchful lover. He had no *petits soins*. Few husbands have, it is true; nor is it necessary for husbands in general. But Constance was not an ordinary woman; she loved deeply, but she loved according to her nature —as a woman proud and exacting must love. For Godolphin, her haughty step waxed timorous and vigilant; she always sprang forward the first to meet him on his return from his solitary ramblings, and he smiled upon her with his wonted gentleness, but not so gratefully, thought Constance, as he ought. In truth, he had been too much accustomed to the eager love of Lucilla to feel greatly surprised at any proof of tenderness from Constance. Thus, too proud to speak, to hint a complaint, Constance was nevertheless perpetually wounded, and by degrees (although not loving her husband less) she taught that love to be more concealed. Oh, that accursed secretiveness in women, which makes them always belie themselves!

Godolphin, too, was not without *his* disappointments.

There was something so bright, so purely intellectual about Constance's character, that at times, when brought into constant intercourse with her, you longed for some human weakness—some wild, warm error on which to repose. Dazzling and fair as snow, like snow, your eye ached to gaze upon her. She had, during the years of her ungenial marriage, cultivated her mind to the utmost; few women were so accomplished—it might be, learned; her conversation flowed for ever in the same bright, flowery, adorned stream. There were times when Godolphin recollected how hard it is to read a volume of that Gibbon who in a page is so delightful. Her affection for him was intense, high, devoted; but it was wholly of the same intellectual, spiritualized order; it seemed to Godolphin to want human warmth and fondness. In fact, there never was a woman who, both by original nature and after habits, was so purely and abstractedly "mind" as was Constance; there was not a single trait or taste in her character that a sensualist could have sneered at. Her heart was wholly Godolphin's; her mind was generous, sympathizing, lofty; her person unrivalled in the majesty of its loveliness; all these, too, were Godolphin's, and yet the eternal something was wanting still.

"I have brought you your hat, Percy," said Constance; "you forget the dews are falling fast, and your head is uncovered."

"Thank you," said Percy, gently (yet Constance thought the tone might have been warmer). "How beautiful is this hour! Look yonder, the sun's ray still upon those immortal hills—that lone gray tower among the far plains—the pines around—hearken to their sighing! These are indeed the scenes of the Dryad and the Faun. These are scenes where we could melt our whole nature down to love: Nature never meant us for the stern and arid destinies we fulfil. Look round, Constance, in every leaf of her gorgeous book, how glowingly is written the one sentence, 'LOVE AND BE HAPPY!' You answer not: to these thoughts you are cold."

"They breathe too much of the Epicurean and his rose-leaves for me," answered Constance, smilingly. "I love better that stern old tower, telling of glorious strife and great deeds, than all the *softer* landscape, on which the present debasement of the south seems written."

"You and your English," said Godolphin, somewhat bitterly, "prate of the debasement of my poor Italians in a jargon that I confess almost enrages me." (Constance coloured and bit her lip.) "Debasement! why debasement? They enjoy themselves; they take from life its just moral; they do not affect the more violent crimes; they feel their mortality, follow its common ends, are frivolous, contented, and die! Well, this is debasement. Be it so. But for what would you exchange it? The hard, cold, ferocious guilt of ancient Rome; the detestable hypocrisy, the secret villany, fraud, murder, that stamped republican Venice? The days of glory that you lament are the days of the darkest guilt; and man shudders when he reads what the fair moralizers over the soft and idle Italy sigh to recall!"

"You are severe," said Constance, with a pained voice.

"Forgive me, dearest, but you are often severe on *my* feelings."

Constance was silent; the magic of the sunset was gone; they walked back to the house, thoughtful, and somewhat cooled towards each other.

Another day, on which the rain forbade them to stir from home, Godolphin, after he had remained long silent and meditating, said to Constance, who was busy writing letters to her political friends, in which, avoiding Italy and love, the scheming countess dwelt only on busy England and its internal politics.

"Will you read to me, dear Constance? My spirits are sad to-day! the weather affects them!"

Constance laid aside her letters, and took up one of the many books that strewed the table: it was a volume of one of our most popular poets.

"I hate poetry," said Godolphin, languidly.

"Here is Machiavel's history of the Prince of Lucca," said Constance, quickly.

"Ah, read that, and see how odious is ambition," returned Godolphin.

And Constance read, but she warmed at what Godolphin's lip curled with disdain. The sentiments, however, drew him from his apathy: and presently, with the eloquence he could command when once excited, he poured forth the doctrines of his peculiar philosophy. Constance listened, delighted and absorbed; she did not sympathize with the thought, but she was struck with the genius which clothed it.

"Ah!" said she, with enthusiasm, "why should those brilliant words be thus spoken and lost for ever? Why not stamp them on the living page, or why not invest them in the oratory that would render *you* illustrious and *them* immortal."

"Excellent!" said Godolphin, laughing: "the House of Commons would sympathize with philosophy warmly!"

Yet Constance was right on the whole. But the curse of a life of pleasure is its aversion to useful activity. Talk of the genius that lies crushed and obscure in poverty! Wealth and station have also their mute Miltons and inglorious Hampdens. Alas! how much of deep and true wisdom do we meet among the triflers of the world; how much that, in the stern, middle walks of life would have obtained renown, in the withering and relaxed air of loftier rank dies away unheeded! The two extremes meet in this, the destruction of mental gifts. Godolphin was one among many instances of the evil influence an indolent aristocracy creates, even upon its favourites.

CHAPTER XLIX.

THE RETURN TO LONDON.—THE ETERNAL NATURE OF DISAPPOINTMENT.—FANNY MILLINGER.—HER HOUSE AND SUPPER.

It was in the midst of spring and at the approach of night that our travellers entered London. After an absence of some duration, there is a singular emotion on returning to the roar and tumult of that vast city. Its bustle, its life, its wealth—the tokens of the ambition and commerce of the Great Island Race—have something of inconceivable excitement and power, after the comparative desertion and majestic stillness of Continental cities. Constance leaned restlessly forth from the window of the carriage as it whirled on.

"Oh that I were a man!" said she, fervently.

"And why?" asked Godolphin, smilingly.

"Why! Look out on this broad theatre of universal ambition, and read the why. What a proud and various career lies open in this free city to every citizen! Look, look yonder—the old hereditary Senate, still eloquent with high memories."

"And close by it," said Godolphin, sneering, "behold the tomb!"

"Yes, but the tomb of great men!" said Constance, eagerly.

"The victims of their greatness."

There was a pause; Constance would not reply, she would scarcely listen.

"And do you feel no excitement, Percy, in the hum and bustle—the lights, the pomp of your native city?"

"Yes; I am in the mart where all enjoyment may be purchased."

"Ah, fy!"

Godolphin drew his cloak round him and put up the window. "These cursed east winds!"

Very true—they *are* the curse of the country!

The carriage stopped at the stately portico of Erpingham House. Godolphin felt a little humiliated at being indebted to another—to a woman, for so splendid a tenement; but Constance, not penetrating into this sentiment, hastened up the broad stairs, and said, pointing to a door that led to her boudoir,

"In that room cabinets have been formed and shaken."

Godolphin laughed; he was alive only to the vanity of the boast, because he shared not the enthusiasm; this was Constance's weak point: her dark eye flashed fire.

There's nothing bores a man more than the sort of uneasy quiet that follows a day's journey. Godolphin took his hat, and, yawningly stretching himself, nodded to Constance and moved to the door: they were in her dressing-room at the time.

"Why, what, Percy, you cannot be going out now!"

"Indeed I am, my love."

"Where, in Heaven's name?"

"To White's, to learn the news of the Opera and the strength of the Ballet."

"I had just rung for lights to show you the house!" said Constance, disappointed and half reproachfully.

"Mercy, Constance! damp rooms and east winds together are too much. House indeed! what can there be worth seeing in your English drawing-rooms after the marble palaces of Italy? Any commands?"

"None!" said Constance, sinking back into her chair with the tears in her eyes. Godolphin did not perceive them; he was only displeased by the cold tone of her answer, and he shut the door, muttering to himself, "Was there ever such indelicate ostentation!"

"And thus," said Constance, bitterly, "I return to England; friendless, unloved, solitary in my schemes

and my heart as I was before. Awake, my soul! *thou* art my sole strength, my sole support. Weak, weak that I was to love this man, despite of—Well, well, I am not sunk so low as to regret."

So saying, she wiped away a few tears, and turning with a strong effort from softer thoughts, leaned her cheek on her hand, and, gazing on the fire, surrendered herself to the sterner and more plotting meditations which her return to the circle of her old ambition had at first called forth.

Meanwhile Godolphin sauntered into the then arch-club of St. James's, that reservoir of idle exquisites and kid-gloved politicians. There are two classes of popular men in London; the sprightly, joyous, good-humoured set; the quiet, gentle, sarcastic herd. The one are fellows called devilish good; the other, fellows called devilish gentleman-like. To the latter class belonged Godolphin. As he had never written a book nor set up for a genius, his cleverness was tacitly allowed to be no impediment to his good qualities. Nothing atones for the sin, in the eyes of those young gentlemen who create for their contemporaries reputation, of having in any way distinguished one's self. "He's such a d—d bore, that man with his books and poetry," said an arch-dandy of Byron, just after "Childe Harold" had turned the heads of the women. There happened to be a knot assembled at White's when Godolphin entered; they welcomed him affectionately.

"Wish you joy, old fellow," said one. "Bless me, Godolphin! Well, I am delighted to see you," cried another. "So, you have monopolized Lady Erpingham! Lucky dog!" whispered a third.

Godolphin, his vanity soothed by the reception he met with, spent his evening at the Club. The habit begun, became easy; Godolphin spent *many* evenings at his club. Constance, running the round of her acquaintance, was too proud to complain. Perhaps complaint would not have mended the matter; but one word of delicate tenderness, or one *look* that asked for his society, and White's would have been forsa-

ken! Godolphin secretly resented the very evenness of temper he had once almost overprized.

"Oh, Godolphin," one evening whispered a young lord, "we sup at the little actress's—*the* Millinger; you remember the Millinger? You must come; you are an old favourite, you know: she'll be so glad to see you—all innocent, by-the-way: Lady Erpingham need not be jealous—(jealous! Constance jealous of Fanny Millinger!)—all innocent. Come, I'll drive you there; my cab's at the door."

"Anything better than a lecture on ambition," thought Godolphin; and he consented. Godolphin's friend was a lively young nobleman, of that good-natured, easy, uncaptious temper, which a clever, susceptible, indolent man often likes better than comrades more intellectual, because he has not to put himself out of his way in the comradeship. Lord Falconer rattled on, as they drove along the brilliant streets, through a thousand topics, of which Godolphin heard as much as he pleased; and Falconer was of that age and those spirits when a listener may be easily dispensed with.

They arrived at a little villa at Brompton: there was a little garden round it, and a little bower in one corner, all kept excessively neat; and the outside of the house had just been painted white from top to bottom; and there was a verandah to the house; and the windows were plate-glass, with mahogany sashes—only, here and there, a Gothic casement was stuck in, by way of looking "tasty;" and through one window on the ground-floor, the lights shining within showed crimson silk and gilded chairs, and all sorts of finery—Louis Quatorze in a nutshell! The reader knows the sort of house as well as if he had lived in it. Ladies of Fanny Millinger's turn of mind always choose the same kind of habitation. It is astonishing what a unanimity of taste they have; and young men about town call it "taste" too, and imitate the fashion in their own little *tusculums* in Chapel-street.

After having thridded a Gothic hall four feet by eight,

and an oval conservatory with a river-god in the middle, the two visiters found themselves in the presence of Fanny Millinger.

Godolphin had certainly felt no small curiosity to see again the frank, fair, laughing face which had shone on his boyhood, and his mind ran busily back to that summer evening when, with a pulse how different from its present languid tenour, and a heart burning with ardour and the pride of novel independence, the young adventurer first sallied on the world. He drew back involuntarily as he now gazed on the actress; she had kept the promise of her youth, and grown round and full in her proportions. She was extravagantly dressed, but not with an ungraceful, although a theatrical choice: her fair hands and arms were covered with jewels, and that indescribable air which betrays the stage was far more visibly marked in her deportment than when Godolphin first knew her; yet still there was the same freedom as of old, the same joyousness and good-humoured carelessness in her manner and in the silver ring of her voice, as she greeted Falconer and turned to question him as to his friend. Godolphin dropped his cloak, and the next moment, with a pretty scream, quite stage-effect and yet quite natural, the actress had thrown herself into his arms.

"Oh! but I forgot," said she, presently, with a mock salutation of respect, "you are married now; there will be no more cakes and ale. Ah! what long years since we met; yet I have never quite forgotten you, although the stage requires all one's memory for one's new parts. Alas! your hair—it *was* so beautiful—it has lost half its curl, and grown thin. Very rude in me to say so, but I always speak the truth; and my heart warms to see you, so all its thoughts thaw out."

"Well," said Lord Falconer, who had been playing with a little muffy sort of dog, "you'll recollect *me* presently."

"You! Oh, one never thinks of you except when

you speak, and then one recollects you—to look at the clock."

"Very good, Fanny—very good, Fan: and when do you expect Windsor? He ought to be here soon. Tell me, do you like him really?"

"*Like* him? Yes, excessively; just the word for him—for you all. If *love* were thrown into the stream of life, my little sail would be upset in an instant. But, in truth, what with dressing, and playing, and all the grave business of life, I am not idle enough to love. And oh, Godolphin, I'm so improved! Ask Lord Falconer if I don't sing like an angel, although my voice is hardly strong enough to go round a loo-table; but on the stage one learns to dispense with all qualities. It is a curious thing, that fictitious existence, side by side with the real one! We live in enchantment, Percy, and enjoy what the poets pretend to."

The dreaming Godolphin was struck by the remark. He was surprised, also, to see how much Fanny remained the same. A life of gayety had not debased *her*.

Tom Windsor came next, an Irishman of five-and-forty, not like his countrymen in aught save wit. Thin, small, shrivelled, but up to his ears in knowledge of the world, and with a jest for ever on his tongue; rich and gay, he was always popular, and he made the most of this little life without being an absolute rascal. Next dropped in the handsome Frenchman, De Damville; next, the young gambler, St. John; next, two ladies, both actresses; and the party was complete.

The supper was like the house, very fine, and suited to the tastes of the palace; the best wines, excellent viands—the actress had grown rich. Wit, noise, good-humour, anecdote, flashed round with the Champagne; and Godolphin, exhilarated into a second youth, fancied himself once more the votary of pleasure.

CHAPTER L.

GODOLPHIN'S SOLILOQUY. — HE BECOMES A MAN OF PLEASURE AND A PATRON OF THE ARTS.—A NEW CHARACTER SHADOWED FORTH; FOR, AS WE PROGRESS, WHETHER IN LIFE OR ITS REPRESENTATION, CHARACTERS ARE MORE FAINT AND DIMLY DRAWN THAN IN THE EARLIER PART OF OUR CAREER.

"YES," said Godolphin, the next morning, as he soliloquized over his lonely breakfast-table—lonely, for the hours of the restless Constance were not those of the luxurious and indolent Godolphin, and she was already in her carriage—nay, already closeted with an intriguing ambassadress: "Yes, I have passed two eras of life: the first of romance, the second of contemplation; once my favourite study was poetry, next philosophy. Now, returned to my native country, rich, settled, yet young, new objects arise to me; not that vulgar and troublous ambition (which is to make a toil of life) that Constance suggests, but a more warm and vivid existence than that I have lately dreamed away. Let luxury and pleasure now be to me what solitude and thought were. I have been too long the solitary, I will learn to be social."

Agreeably to this resolution, Godolphin returned with avidity to the enjoyment of the world; he found himself courted, he courted society in return. Erpingham House had been for years the scene of fascination; who does not recollect the yet greater refinement which its new lord threw over its circles? A delicate and just conception of the fine arts had always characterized Godolphin. He now formed that ardour for collecting common to the more elegant order of minds. From his beloved Italy he imported the most beautiful statues —his cabinets were filled with gems—his walls glowed

with the triumphs of the canvass—the showy but heterogeneous furniture of Erpingham House gave way to a more classic and perfect taste. The same fastidiousness which in the affairs of the heart had characterized Godolphin's habits and sentiments, characterized his new pursuits; the same thirst for the ideal, the same worship of the beautiful, and aspirations after the perfect.

It was not in Constance's nature to admit this smaller ambition; her taste was pure but not minute; she did not descend to the philosophy of detail. But she was glad still to see that Godolphin could be aroused to the discovery of an active object; and, although she sighed to perceive his fine genius frittered away on the trifles of the virtuoso—although she secretly regretted the waste of her great wealth (which afforded to political ambition so high an advantage) on the mute marble, and what she deemed, nor unjustly, frivolous curiosities—she still never interfered with Godolphin's caprices, conscious that, to his delicacy, a single objection to his wishes on the score of expense would have reminded him of what she wished him most to forget, viz., that the means of this lavish expenditure were derived from her. She hoped that his mind, once fairly awakened, would soon grow sated with the acquisition of bawbles, and at length sigh for loftier objects; and, in the mean while, she plunged into her old party plots and ambitious intrigues.

Erpingham House, celebrated as ever for the beauty of its queen and the political nature of its entertainments, received a new celebrity from its treasures of art, and the spiritual wit and grace with which Godolphin invested its attractions. Among the crowd of its guests there was one whom its owners more particularly distinguished; Stainforth Radclyffe was still considerably under thirty, but already a distinguished man. At school he had been distinguished: at college distinguished; and now, in the world of science, distinguished also. Beneath a quiet, soft, and cold exterior, he concealed the most resolute and ceaseless ambition;

and this ambition was the governing faculty of his soul. His energies were unfrittered by small objects; for he went little into general society, and he especially sought in his studies those pursuits which nerve and brace the mind. He was a profound thinker, a deep political economist, an accurate financier, a judge of the intricacies of morals and legislation—for to his mere book-studies he added an instinctive penetration into men; and when from time to time he rejoined the world, he sought out those most distinguished in the sciences he had cultivated, and by their lights corrected his own. In him there was nothing desultory or undetermined; his conduct was perpetual calculation. He did nothing but with an eye to a final object; and when, to the superficial, he seemed most to wander from the road their prudence would have suggested, he was only seeking the surest and shortest paths. Yet his ambition was not the mere vulgar thirst for getting on in the world; he cared little for the paltry place, the petty power, which may reward what are called aspiring young men. His clear sight penetrated to objects that seemed wrapped in shade to all others; and to those only—distant, but vast and towering—he deigned to attach his desires. He cared not for small and momentary rewards; and while always (for he knew its necessity) uppermost on the tide of the hour, he had neither joy nor thought for the petty honours for which he was envied, and by which he was supposed to be elated. Always occupied and always thoughtful, he went, as I have just said, very little into the gay world, and was not very well formed to shine in it when there; for trifles require the whole man as much as matters of importance. He did not want either wit or polish, but he tasked his powers too severely on great subjects not to be sometimes dull upon small ones; yet, when he was either excited or at home, he was not without—what man of genius is?—his peculiar powers of conversation. There was in this young, dark, brooding, stern man, that which had charmed Constance at first sight; she thought to recognise a nature like her own, and Radclyffe's ven-

turous spirit exulted in a commune with hers. Their politics were the same; their ultimate ends not *very* unlike; and their common ambition furnished them with an eternity of topics and schemes. Radclyffe was Constance's guest; but Godolphin soon grew attached to the young politician, though he shrugged his shoulders at his opinions. In youth, Godolphin had been a Tory; now, if anything, he was a Tory still. Such a political creed was perhaps the natural result of his philosophical belief. Constance, Whig by profession, ultra-Liberal in reality, still, however, gave the character to the politics of the house; and the easy Godolphin thought politics the veriest of all the trifles which a man could leave to the discretion of the lady of his household. We may judge, therefore, of the quiet, complacent amusement he felt in the didactics of Radclyffe or the declamations of Constance.

"That is a dangerous, scheming woman, believe me," said the Duchess of —— to her great husband one morning when Constance left her grace.

"Nonsense! women are never dangerous."

CHAPTER LI.

GODOLPHIN'S COURSE OF LIFE.—INFLUENCE OF OPINION AND OF RIDICULE ON THE MINDS OF THE PRIVILEGED ORDERS.—LADY ERPINGHAM'S FRIENDSHIP WITH GEORGE THE FOURTH.—HIS MANNER OF LIVING.

The course of life which Godolphin now led was exactly that which it is natural for a very rich intellectual man to indulge—voluptuous, but refined. He was arriving at that age when the poetry of the heart necessarily decays. Wealth almost unlimited was at his command; he had no motive for exertion; and he now sought in pleasure that which he had formerly

asked from romance. Despising, as we have seen, all ambition, his faculties and talents had no other circle for display than that which "society" affords; and, by slow degrees, society—its applause and its regard—became to him of greater importance than his "philosophy dreamed of." Whatever the circle we live among, the public opinion of that circle will, sooner or later, obtain a control over us. This is the reason why a life of pleasure makes even the strongest mind frivolous at last. The lawyer, the senator, the man of letters, all are insensibly guided—moulded—formed—by the judgment of the tribe they belong to, and the circle in which they move. Still more is it the case with the idlers of the great world, among whom the only main staple of talk is "themselves."

And in the last-named set, Ridicule being more strong and fearful a deity than she is among the cultivators of the graver occupations of life, reduces the inmates, by a constant dread of incurring her displeasure, to a more monotonous and regular subjection to the judgment of others. Ridicule is the stifler of all energy among those she controls. After a man's position in society is once established—after he has arrived at a certain age—he does not like to hazard any intellectual enterprise which may endanger the quantum of respect or popularity at present allotted to him. He does not like to risk a failure in parliament—a caustic criticism in literature; he does not like to excite new jealousies, and provoke angry rivals where he now finds complaisant inferiors. The most admired authors, the most respected members of either house, now looked up to Godolphin as a man of wit and genius; a man whose house, whose wealth, whose wife gave him an influence few individuals enjoy. Why risk all this respect by provoking comparison? Among the first in one line, why sink into the probability of being second-rate in another?

This motive, which secretly governs half the aristocracy—the clever half, viz., the more diffident and the more esteemed; which leaves to the obtuse and

the vain a despised and unenviable notoriety, added new force to Godolphin's philosophical indifference to ambition. Perhaps, had his situation been less brilliant, or had he persevered in that early affection for solitude which youth loves as the best nurse to its dreams, he might now, in attaining an age when ambition, often dumb before, usually begins to make itself heard, have awakened to a more resolute and aspiring temperature of mind. But, as it was, courted and surrounded by all the enjoyments which are generally the reward to which exertion looks, even an ambitious man might have forgotten his nature. No wound to his vanity, *no feeling that he was underrated* (that great spur to proud minds), excited him to those exertions we undertake in order to belie calumny. He was "the glass of fashion," at once popular and admired; and his good fortune in marrying the celebrated, the wealthy, the beautiful Countess of Erpingham was, as success always is, considered the proof of his genius and the token of his merits.

It was certainly true that a secret and mutual disappointment rankled beneath the brilliant lot of the husband and wife. Godolphin exacted from Constance more softness, more devotion, more compliance than belonged to her nature; and Constance, on the other hand, ceased not to repine that she found in Godolphin no sympathy with her objects and no feeling for her enthusiasm. As there was little congenial in their pursuits, the one living for pleasure, the other for ambition, there could be no congeniality in their intercourse. They loved each other still; they loved each other warmly; they never quarrelled; for the temper of Constance was mild, and that of Godolphin generous: but neither believed there was much love on the other side; and both sought abroad that fellowship and those objects they had not in common at home.

Constance was a great favourite with the reigning king; she was constantly invited to the narrow circle of festivities at Windsor. Godolphin, who avoided *the being bored* as the greatest of earthly evils, could

not bow down his tastes and habits to any exact and precise order of life, however distinguished the circle in which it became the rule. Thirsting to be amused, he could not conjugate the *active* verb "to amuse." No man was more fitted to adorn a court, yet no one could less play the courtier. He admired the manners of the sovereign, he did homage to the natural acuteness of his understanding; but, accustomed as he was to lay down the law in society, he was too proud to receive it from another; a common case among those who live with the great by right, and not through sufferance. His pride made him fear to seem a parasite; and, too chivalrous to be disloyal, he was too haughty to be subservient. In fact, he was thoroughly formed to be the Great Aristocrat—a career utterly distinct from that of the hanger-on upon a still greater man; and against his success at court he had an obstacle no less in the inherent *fierté* of his nature than in the acquired philosophy of his cynicism.

The king, at first, was civil enough to Lady Erpingham's husband; but he had penetration enough to see that he was not adequately admired; and, on the first demonstration of royal coolness, Godolphin, glad of an excuse, forswore castle and pavilion for ever, and left Constance to enjoy alone the honours of the regal hospitality. The world would have insinuated scandal; but there was that about Constance's beauty which there is said by one of the poets to belong to an angel's—it struck the heart, but awed the senses.

CHAPTER LII.

RADCLYFFE AND GODOLPHIN CONVERSE.—THE VARIETIES OF AMBITION.

"I DON'T know," said Godolphin to Radclyffe, as they were one day riding together among the green lanes that border the metropolis, "I don't know what to do with myself this evening. Lady Erpingham is gone to Windsor; I have no dinner engagement, and I am wearied of balls. Shall we dine together, and go to the play quietly, as we might have done some ten years ago?"

"Nothing I should like better; and the theatre—are you fond of it now? I think I have heard you say that it once made your favourite amusement."

"I still like it passably," answered Godolphin; "but the gloss is gone from the delusion. I am grown mournfully fastidious. I must have excellent acting, an excellent play. A slight fault, a slight deviation from nature, robs me of my content at the whole."

"The same fault in your character pervading all things," said Radclyffe, half smiling.

"True," said Godolphin, yawning; "but have you seen my new Canova?"

"No: I care nothing for statues, and I know nothing of the Fine Arts."

"What a confession!"

"Yes, it is a rare confession: but I suspect that the arts, like truffles and olives, are an acquired taste. People talk themselves into admiration where at first they felt indifference. But how can you, Godolphin, with your talents, fritter away life on these bawbles?"

"You are civil," said Godolphin, impatiently. "Allow me to tell you that it is your objects *I* consider bawbles. Your dull, plodding, wearisome honours; a

name in the newspapers—a place, perhaps, in the ministry, purchased by a sacrificed youth and a degraded manhood—a youth in labour, a manhood in schemes. No, Radclyffe! give me the bright, the glad sparkle of existence; and, ere the sad years of age and sickness, let me at least *enjoy*. That is wisdom! *Your* creed is—but I will not imitate your rudeness!" and Godolphin laughed,

"Certainly," replied Radclyffe, "you do your best to enjoy yourself. You live well and fare sumptuously: your house is superb, your villa enchanting. Lady Erpingham is the handsomest woman of her time: and, as if that were not enough, half the fine women in London admit you at their feet. Yet you are not happy."

"Ay: but who is?" cried Godolphin, energetically.

"I am," said Radclyffe, dryly.

"You! humph!"

"You disbelieve me."

"I have no right to do so: but are you not ambitious? And is not ambition full of anxiety, care—mortification at defeat, disappointment in success? Does not the very word ambition—that is, a desire to be something you are not—prove you discontented with what you are?"

"You speak of a vulgar ambition," said Radclyffe.

"Most august sage! and what species of ambition is yours?"

"Not that which you describe. You speak of the ambition for self: my ambition is singular—it is the ambition for others. Some years ago I chanced to form an object in what I considered the welfare of my race. You smile. Nay, I boast no virtue in my dream; but philanthropy was my hobby, as statues may be yours. To effect this object, I see great changes are necessary: I desire, I work for these great changes. I am not blind, in the mean while, to glory. I desire, on the contrary, to obtain it; but it would only please me if it came from certain sources. I want to feel that I may realize what I attempt; and

wish for that glory that comes from the permanent gratitude of my species, not that which springs from their momentary applause. Now I am vain, very vain: vanity was, some years ago, the strongest characteristic of my nature. I do not pretend to conquer the weakness, but to turn it towards my purposes. I am vain enough to wish to shine, but the light must come from deeds I think really worthy."

"Well, well!" said Godolphin, a little interested in spite of himself; "but ambition of one sort resembles ambition of another, inasmuch as it involves perpetual harassments and humiliations."

"Not so," answered Radclyffe; "because, when a man is striving for what he fancies a laudable object, the goodness of his intentions comforts him for a failure in success, whereas your selfishly ambitious man has no consolation in *his* defeats; he is humbled by the external world, and has no inner world to apply to for consolation."

"Oh, man!" said Godolphin, almost bitterly, "how dost thou eternally deceive thyself! Here is the thirst for power, and it calls itself the love of mankind."

"Believe me," said Radclyffe, so earnestly, and with so deep a meaning in his grave, bright eye, that Godolphin was staggered from his skepticism; "believe me, they may be distinct passions, and yet can be united."

CHAPTER LIII.

FANNY BEHIND THE SCENES.—REMINISCENCES OF YOUTH.—THE UNIVERSALITY OF TRICK.—THE SUPPER AT FANNY MILLINGER'S.—TALK ON A THOUSAND MATTERS, EQUALLY LIGHT AND TRUE.—FANNY'S SONG.

The play was "Pizarro," and Fanny Millinger acted *Cora*. Godolphin and Radclyffe went behind the scenes.

"Ah!" said Fanny, as she stood in her white Peruvian dress, waiting her turn to re-enter the stage, "ah, Godolphin, this reminds me of old times. How many years have passed since you used to take such pleasure in this mimic life! Well do I remember your musing eye and thoughtful brow bent kindly on me from the stage-box yonder: and do you recollect how prettily you used to moralize on the deserted scenes when the play was over? And you sometimes waited on these very boards to escort me home. Those times have changed. Heighho!"

"Ay, Fanny, we have passed through new worlds of feeling since then. Could life be to us now what it was at that time, we might love each other anew: but tell me, Fanny, has not the experience of life made you a wiser woman? Do you not seek more to enjoy the present—to pluck Time's fruit on the bough ere yet the ripeness is gone? I do. I dreamed away my youth, I strive to enjoy my manhood."

"Then," said Fanny, with that quickness with which, in matters of the heart, women beat all our philosophy, "then I can prophecy that, since we parted, you have loved or lost some one. Regret, which converts the active mind into the dreaming temper, makes the dreamer hurry into activity, whether of business or of pleasure."

"Right," said Radclyffe, as a shade darkened his stern brow.

"Right," said Godolphin, thoughtfully, and Lucilla's image smote his heart like an avenging conscience. "Right," repeated he, turning aside and soliloquizing; "and those words from an idle tongue have taught me some of the motives of my present conduct. But away, reflection! I have resolved to forswear it. My pretty Cora!" said he aloud, as he turned back to the actress, "you are a very De Staël in your wisdom: but let us not be wise; 'tis the worst of our follies. Do you not give us one of your charming suppers to-night?"

"To be sure: your friend will join us. He was once the gayest of the gay; but years and fame have altered him a little."

"Radclyffe gay! Bah!" said Godolphin, surprised.

"Ay, you may well look astonished," said Fanny, archly: "but note that smile: it tells of old days."

And Godolphin, turning to his friend, saw indeed on the thin lip of that earnest face a smile so buoyant, so joyous, that it seemed as if the whole character of the man were gone: but while he gazed, the smile vanished, and Radclyffe gravely declined the invitation.

Cora was now on the stage: a transport of applause shook the house.

"How well she acts!" said Radclyffe, warmly.

"Yes," answered Godolphin, as with folded arms he looked quietly on: "but what a lesson in the human heart does good acting teach us. Mark that glancing eye—that heaving breast—that burst of passion—that agonized voice: the spectators are in tears! The woman's whole soul is in her child! Not a bit of it! She feels no more than the boards we tread on: she is probably thinking of the lively supper we shall have; and when she comes off the stage, she will cry, 'Did I not *act* it well?'"

"Nay," said Radclyffe, "she probably feels while she depicts the feeling."

"Not she: years ago she told me the whole science of acting was trick; and trick—trick—trick it is, on the stage or off. The noble art of oratory—(noble forsooth!)—is just the same: philosophy, poetry—all, all hypocrisy. 'Damn the moon!' said B—— to me, as we once stood gazing on it at Venice; 'it always gives me the ague: but I have described it well in my poetry, Godolphin—eh?'"

"But—" began Radclyffe.

"But me no buts," interrupted Godolphin, with the playful pertinacity which he made so graceful: "you are younger than I am; when you have lived as long, you shall have a right to contradict my system—not before."

Godolphin joined the supper-party. Like Godolphin's, Fanny's life was the pursuit of pleasure: she lavished on it, in proportion to her means, the same

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cost and expense, though she wanted the same taste and refinement. Generous and profuse, like all her tribe—like all persons who win money easily—she was charitable to all and luxurious in herself. The supper was attended by four male guests—Godolphin, Saville, Lord Falconer, and Mr. Windsor.

It was early summer: the curtains were undrawn, the windows half opened, and the moonlight slept on the little grassplot that surrounded the house. The guests were in high spirits. "Fill me this goblet," cried Godolphin; "Champagne is the boy's liquor; I will return to it *con amore*. Fanny, let us pledge each other: stay: a toast! What shall it be?"

"Hope till old age, and Memory afterward," said Fanny, smiling.

"Pshaw! theatricals still, Fan?" growled Saville, who had placed a large screen between himself and the window; "no sentiment between friends."

"Out on you, Saville," said Godolphin; "as well might you say no music out of the opera; these verbal prettinesses colour conversation. But you *roués* are so d—d prosaic; you want us to walk to Vice without a flower by the way."

"Vice, indeed!" cried Saville. "I abjure your villanous appellatives. It was in your companionship that I lost my character, and now you turn king's evidence against the poor devil you seduced."

"Humph!" cried Godolphin, gayly; "you remind me of the advice of the Spanish hidalgo to a servant; always choose a master with a good memory; for, 'if he does not pay, he will at least remember that he owes you.' In future I shall take care to herd only with those who recollect, after they are finally debauched, all the good advice I gave them beforehand."

"Meanwhile," said the pretty Fanny, with her arch mouth half full of chicken, "I shall recollect that Mr. Saville drinks his wine without toasts—as being a useless delay."

"Wine," said Mr. Windsor, sententiously, "wine is just the reverse of love. Your old topers are all for

coming at once to the bottle, and your lovers for ever mumbling the toast."

"See what you have brought on yourself, Saville, by affecting a joke upon me," said Godolphin. "Come, let us make it up: we fell out with the toast, let us be reconciled with the glass. Champagne?"

"Ay, anything for a quiet life—even Champagne," said Saville, with a mock air of patience, and dropping his sharp features into a state of the most placid repose. "You wits are so very severe. Yes, Champagne if you please. Fanny, my love," and Saville made a wry face as he put down the scarce-tasted glass, "go on: another joke, if you please; I now find I can bear your satire better, at least, than your wine."

Fanny was all bustle: it is in these things that the actress differs from the lady—there is no quiet in her. "Another bottle of Champagne: what can have happened to this?" Poor Fanny was absolutely pained. Saville enjoyed it, for he always revenged a jest by an impertinence.

"Nay," said Godolphin, "our friend does but joke. Your Champagne is excellent, Fanny. Well, Saville, and where is young Greenhough? He is vanished. Report says he was marked down in your company, and has not risen since."

"Report is the civillest jade in the world. According to her, all the pigeons disappear in my fields. But, seriously speaking, Greenhough is off—gone to America—over head and ears in debt—debts of honour. Now," said Saville, very slowly, "there's the difference between the gentleman and the *parvenu*; the gentleman, when all is lost, cuts his throat: the *parvenu* only cuts his creditors. I am really very angry with Greenhough that he did not destroy himself. A young man under my protection and all; so d—d ungrateful in him."

"He was not much in your debt—eh?" said Lord Falconer, speaking for the first time as the wine began to get into his head.

Saville looked hard at the speaker.

"Lord Falconer, a pinch of snuff: there is something singularly happy in your question; so much to the point; you have great knowledge of the world—great. He *was* very much in my debt. I introduced the vulgar dog into the world, and he owes me all the thousands he had the honour to lose in good society!"

"Do you know, Percy," continued Saville, "do you know, by-the-way, that my poor dear friend Jasmin is dead? died after a hearty game at whist. He had just time to cry 'four by honours,' when death *trumped* him. It was a great shock to me: he was the second best player at Graham's. Those sudden deaths are very awful, especially with the game in one's hands."

"Very mortifying indeed," seriously said Lord Falconer, who had just been initated into whist.

"'Tis droll," said Saville, "to see how often the last words of a man tally with his life; 'tis like the moral to the fable. The best instance I know is in Lord Chesterfield, whose fine soul went out in that sublime and inimitable sentence, 'Give Darrell a chair.'"

"Capital!" cried Lord Falconer. "Saville, a game at *écarté*."

As the lion in the Tower looked at the lapdog, so, in all the compassion of contempt, looked Saville on Lord Falconer.

"*Infelix puer!*" muttered Godolphin; "*Infelix puer atque impar congressus Achilli.*"

"With all my heart," said Saville at last. "Yet, no—we've been talking of death—such topics waken a man's conscience. Falconer, I never play for less than—"

"Ponies! I know it!" cried Falconer, triumphantly.

"Ponies! Less than chargers."

"Chargers! What are chargers?"

"The whole receipts of an Irish peer, Lord Falconer; and I make it a point never to lose the first game."

"Such men are dangerous," said Mr. Windsor, with his eyes shut.

"Oh, Night!" cried Godolphin, springing up theat-

rically, "thou wert made for song, and moonlight, and laughter—but women's laughter! Fanny, a song—the pretty quaint song *you* sang me, years ago, in favour of a town love and an easy life."

Fanny, who had been in the pouts ever since Saville had blamed the Champagne—for she was very anxious to be of *bon ton* in her own little way—now began to smile once more; and, as the moon played on her arch face, she seated herself at the piano, and, glancing at Godolphin, sang the following song:

LOVE COURTS THE PLEASURES.

1.

Believe me, Love was never made
In deserts to abide;
Leave Age to take the sober shade,
And Youth the sunny side.

2.

Love dozes by the purling brook,
No friend to lonely places;
Or, if he toy with Strephon's crook,
His Chloes are the Graces.

3.

Forsake "The Flaunting Town!" Alas!
Be cells for saints, my own love!
The wine of life's a *social* glass,
Nor may be quaffed alone, love.

4.

Behold the dead and solemn sea,
To which our beings flow;
Let waves that soon so dark must be,
Catch every glory now.

5.

I would not chain that heart to this,
To sicken at the rest;
The cage we close a prison is,
The open cage a nest.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE CAREER OF CONSTANCE.—REAL STATE OF HER FEELINGS TOWARDS GODOLPHIN.—RAPID SUCCESSION OF POLITICAL EVENTS.—CANNING'S ADMINISTRATION.—CATHOLIC QUESTION.—LORD GREY'S SPEECH.—CANNING'S DEATH.

WHILE in scenes like these, alternated with more refined and polished dissipation, Godolphin lavished away his life, Constance became more and more powerful as one of the ornaments of a great political party. Few women in England ever mixed more actively in politics than Lady Erpingham, or with more remarkable ability. Her friends were out of office, it is true; but she saw the time approaching rapidly when their opinions must come into power. She had begun to love, for itself, the scheming of political ambition, and in any country but England she would have been a conspirator, but in old times might have risen to be a queen; but, as it was, she was only a proud, discontented woman. She knew, too, that it was all she could be, all that her sex allowed her to be; yet she did not the less struggle and toil on. The fate of her father still haunted her; her promise and his death-bed still rose oft and solemnly before her; the humiliations she had known in her early condition, the homage that had attended her later career, still cherished in her haughty soul indignation at the faction he had execrated, and little less of the mighty class which that faction represented. That system of "fashion" which she had so mainly contributed to strengthen, and which was originally by her intended to build up a standard of opinion, independent of mere rank, and in defiance of mere wealth, she saw polluted and debased, by the nature of its followers, into a vulgar effrontery, which

was worse than the more quiet dulness it had attempted to supplant. Yet still she was comforted by the thought that through this system lay the way to more wholesome changes. The idols of rank and wealth once broken, she believed that a pure and sane worship must ultimately be established. Doubtless in the old French *régime* there were many women who *thought* like her, but there were none who *acted* like her—deliberately, and with an end. What an excellent, what a warning picture is contained in the entertaining memoirs of Count Segur! how admirably that agreeable gossip develops the state of mind among the nobility of France! "merry censurers of the old customs"—"enchanted by the philosophy of Voltaire"—"ridiculing the old system"—"embracing liberality as a fashion," and "gayly treading a soil bedecked with flowers, which concealed a precipice from their view!" In England there are fewer flowers, and the precipice will be less fearful.

A certain disappointment which had attended her marriage with Godolphin, and the disdainful resentment she felt at the pleasures that allured him from her, tended yet more to deepen at once her distaste for the habits of a frivolous society, and to nerve and concentrate her powers of political intrigue. Her mind grew more and more masculine; her dark eye burned with a sterner fire; the sweet mouth was less prodigal of its smiles; and that air of dignity which she had always possessed, grew harder in its character and became *command*.

This change did not tend to draw Godolphin nearer to her. He, so susceptible to coldness, so refining, so exacting, believed fully that she loved him no more—that she repented the marriage she had contracted. His pride was armed against her; and he sought more eagerly those scenes where all, for the admired, the gallant, the sparkling Godolphin, wore smiles and sunshine.

There was another matter that rankled in his breast with peculiar bitterness. He had wished to raise a

large sum of money (in the purchase of some celebrated works of art), which could only be raised with Lady Erpingham's consent. When he had touched upon the point to her, she had not refused, but she had hesitated. She seemed embarrassed, and, he thought, discontented. His delicacy took alarm, and he never recurred to the question again; but he was secretly much displeased with her reluctant manner on that occasion. Nothing the proud so little forget as a coolness conceived upon money matters. In this instance Godolphin afterward discovered that he had wronged Constance, and misinterpreted the cause of her reluctance.

Yet, as time flew on for both, both felt a yearning of the heart towards each other; and, had they been thrown upon a desert island—had there been full leisure, full opportunity for a frank, unfettered interchange of thought—they would have been mutually astonished to find themselves still so beloved, and each would have been dearer to the other than the first hour of earlier attachment. But when once, in a very gay and occupied life, a husband and wife have admitted a seeming indifference to creep in between them, the chances are a thousand to one against its after-removal. How much more so with a wife so proud as Constance and a husband so refining as Godolphin! Fortunately, however, as I said before, the temper of each was excellent; they never quarrelled; and the indifference, therefore, lay on the surface, not at the depth. They seemed to the world an affectionate couple, as couples go; and their union would have been classed by Rouchefoucault among those marriages that are very happy—*il n'y a point de délicieux.*

Meanwhile, as Constance had predicted, the political history of the country was marked by a perpetual progress towards liberal opinions. Mr. Canning was now in office: the Catholic Question was in every one's mouth: that measure, so aristocratic in itself, so strong a proof—(in the greater sensation produced by the claim of peers and gentlemen to sit in Parliament and

hold office, than by the gathering distresses of the people—the accumulated evils of the Poor Laws)—how essentially aristocratic was the mental constitution of the upper classes; that question, so really insignificant to the weal of a great empire when considered alone, was yet the first iron blow at Persecution for opinion's sake; and in this light only Constance regarded it. Doubtless, had the good of the people been the paramount interest of the Legislature, a solid and large reform in the Criminal Code would have craved attention far more loudly, far more immediately than the rights of the Catholics to sit in Parliament: but the one was for the small, the other for the great: it is always in squabbles among themselves that an aristocracy open a breach for the people.

There was a brilliant meeting at Erpingham House; those who composed it were of the heads of the party: but there were divisions among themselves; some were secretly for joining Mr. Canning's administration; some had openly done so; others remained in stubborn and jealous opposition. With these last was the heart of Constance.

"Well, well, Lady Erpingham," said Lord Paul Plympton, a young nobleman who had written a dull history, and was therefore considered likely to succeed in parliamentary life—"well, I cannot help thinking you are too severe upon Canning; he is certainly very liberal in his views."

"Is there one law he ever caused to pass for the benefit of the working classes? No, Lord Paul, his Whiggism is for peers, and his Toryism for peasants. With the same zeal he advocates the Catholic Question and the Manchester Massacre."

"Yet, surely," cried Lord Paul, "you make a difference between the just liberality that provides for property and intelligence, and the dangerous liberality that would slacken the reins of an ignorant multitude."

"But," said Mr. Benson, a very powerful member of the Lower House, "true politicians must conform to circumstances. Canning may not be all we wish, but

still he ought to be supported. I confess that I shall be generous: I care not for office, I care not for power; but Canning is surrounded with enemies, who are enemies also to the people: for that reason I shall support him."

"Bravo, Benson!" cried Lord Paul.

"Bravo, Benson!" echoed two or three notables, who had waited an opportunity to declare themselves; "that's what I call handsome."

"Manly!"

"Fair!"

"Disinterested, by Jove!"

Here the Duke of Aspindale suddenly entered the room. "Ah, Lady Erpingham, you should have been in the Lords to-night: such a speech! Canning is crushed for ever."

"Speech! from whom?"

"Lord Grey—terrific: it was the vengeance of a life concentrated into one hour; it has shaken the ministry fearfully."

"Humph!" said Benson, rising; "I shall go to Brooks's and hear more."

"And I too," said Lord Paul.

A day or two after, Benson, in presenting a petition, alluded in terms of high eulogy to the masterly speech made last night by a noble earl; and Lord Paul Plympton said, "It was indeed unequalled."

That's what I call handsome.

Manly!

Fair!

Disinterested, by Jove!

And Canning died; his gallant soul left the field of politics broken into a thousand petty parties. From the time of his death the two great hosts into which the strugglers for power were divided have never recovered their former strength. The demarcation that his policy had tended to efface was afterward more weakened by his successor the Duke of Wellington; and had it not been for the question of Reform that

again drew the stragglers on either side around one determined banner, it is likely that Whig and Tory would, among the many minute sections and shades of difference, have lost for ever the two broad distinguishing colours of their separate factions.

Mr. Canning died; and now, with redoubled energy, went on the wheels of political intrigue. The rapid succession of short-lived administrations, the leisure of a prolonged peace, the pressure of debt, the writings of philosophers, all insensibly, yet quickly, excited that popular temperament which found its crisis in the Reform Bill.

CHAPTER LV.

THE DEATH OF GEORGE IV.—THE POLITICAL SITUATION OF PARTIES, AND OF LADY ERPINGHAM.

THE death of George the Fourth was the birth of a new era. During the later years of that monarch a silent spirit had been gathering over the land, which had crept even to the very walls of his seclusion. It cannot be denied that the various expenses of his reign —no longer consecrated by the youthful graces of the prince, no longer disguised beneath the military triumphs of the people—had contributed far more than theoretical speculations to the desire of political change. The shortest road to liberty lies through attenuated pockets!

Constance was much at Windsor during the king's last illness, one of the saddest periods that ever passed within the walls of a palace. The memorialists of the reign of the magnificent Louis XIV. will best convey to the reader a notion of the last days of George IV. For, like that great king, he was the representation in himself of a particular period, and

he preserved much of the habits of (and much, too, of the personal interest attached to) his youth through the dreary decline of age. It was melancholy to see one who had played, not only so exalted, but so gallant a part, breathing his life away; nor was the gloom diminished by the many glimpses of a fine original nature which broke forth amid infirmity and disease.

George IV. died: his brother succeeded; and the English world began to breathe more freely, to look around, and to feel that the change, long coming, was come at last. The French Revolution, the new parliament, Lord Brougham's return for Yorkshire, Mr. Hume's return for Middlesex, the burst of astonished indignation at the Duke of Wellington's memorable words against reform, all betrayed, while they ripened, the signs of the new age. The Whig ministry was appointed; appointed amid discontents in the city, suspicions among the friends of the people, amid fires and insurrections in the provinces; convulsions abroad, and turbulence at home.

The situation of Constance in these changes was rather curious; her intimacy with the late king was no recommendation with the Whig government of his successor. Her power, as the power of fashion always must in stormy times, had received a shock; and as she had of late been a little divided from the main body of the Whigs, she did not share at once in their success, or claim to be one of their allies. She remained silent and aloof; her parties were numerous and splendid as ever, but the small plotting *réunions* of political intriguers were suspended. She hinted mysteriously at the necessity of pausing, to see *what* reform the new ministers would recommend, and what economy they would effect. The Tories, especially the more moderate tribe, began to court her; the Whigs, flushed with their triumph, and too busy to think of women, began to neglect. This last circumstance the high Constance felt keenly, but with the keenness rather of scorn than indignation; years had deepened her secret disgust at all aristocratic ordinan-

ces; and looking rather at what the Whigs had been than what, pressed by the times, they have become, she regarded them as only playing with democrat counters for aristocratic rewards. She repaid their neglect with contempt, and the silent neutralist soon became regarded by them as the secret foe.

But Constance was sufficiently the woman to feel mortified and wounded by that which she affected to despise. No post at court had been offered to her by her former friends; the confidant of George the Fourth had ceased to be the confidant of Lord Grey. Arrived at that doubtful time of life when the beauty, although possessing, is no longer assured of her charms, she felt the decay of her personal influence as a personal affront; and thus vexed, wounded, alarmed in her mid-career, Constance was more than ever sensible of the peculiar disquietudes that await female ambition, and turned with sighs more frequent than heretofore to the recollections of that domestic love which seemed lost to her for ever.

Mingled with the more outward and visible storm of politics there was, as there ever is, a latent tide of more theoretic and ultimate opinions. While the practical politicians were playing their momentary parts, schemers, and levellers, and speculators were propagating in all quarters doctrines which they fondly imagined were addressed to immortal ends. And Constance began to turn with some curiosity to these charlatans or sages. The bright countess listened to their harangues, pondered over their demonstrations, and mused over their hopes. But she had lived too much on the surface of the actual world; her habits of thought were too essentially worldly to be converted, while she was attracted, by doctrines so startling in their ultimate conclusions. She turned once more to herself, and waited, in a sad and thoughtful stillness, the progress of things—convinced only of the vanity of them all.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE ROUÉ A VALETUDINARIAN.—NEWS.—A FORTUNE-TELLER.

MEANWHILE the graced Godolphin floated down the sunny tide of his prosperity. He lived chiefly with a knot of epicurean dalliers with the time, whom he had selected from the wittiest and the easiest of the London world. Dictator of theatres—patron of operas—oracle in music—mirror of entertainments and equipage—to these conditions had his natural genius and his once dreaming dispositions been bowed at last! A round of dissipation, however, left him no time for reflection; and he believed (perhaps he was not altogether wrong) that the best way to preserve the happy equilibrium of the heart is to blunt its susceptibilities. As the most uneven shapes, when whirled into rapid and ceaseless motion, will appear a perfect circle, so, once impelled in a career that admits no pause, our life loses its uneven angles, and glides on in smooth and rounded celerity, with false aspects more symmetrical than the truth.

One day Godolphin visited Saville; who now, old, worn, and fast waning to the grave, cropped the few flowers on the margin, and jested, but with sourness, on his own decay. He found the actress (who had also come to visit the man of pleasure) sitting by the window, and rattling away with her usual vivacity, while she divided her attention with the labours of knitting a purse.

"Heaven only knows," said Saville, "what all these times will produce. I lose my head in the dizzy quickness of events—Fanny, hand me my snuff-box. Well, I fancy my last hour is not far distant; but I hope, at least, I shall die a gentleman. I have

a great dislike to the thought of being revolutionized into a *roturier*. That's the only sort of revolution I have any notion about. What do you say to all this, Godolphin? Every one else is turning politician; young Sunderland, with his brocade waistcoat, whirls his cab down to the House at four o'clock every day; dines at Bellamy's on cold beef; and talks of nothing but that d—d good speech of Sir Robert's! Revolutions! faith, the revolution is come already. Revolutions only change the aspect of society; is it not changed enough within the last six months? Bah! I suppose you are bit by the mania?"

"Not I! while I live I will abjure the vulgar toil of ambition. Let others rule or ruin the state; like the Duc de Lauzun, while the guillotine is preparing, I will think only of my oysters and my Champagne."

"A noble creed!" said Fanny, smiling: "let the world go to wreck, and bring me my biscuit! That's Godolphin's motto."

"It is life's motto."

"Yes—a gentleman's life."

"Pish! Fanny, no satire from you: you, who are not (properly speaking) even a *tragic* actress! But there is something about your profession sublimely picturesque in the midst of these noisy brawls. The storms of nations shake not the stage; you are wrapped in another life; the atmosphere of poetry girds you. You are like the fairies who lived among men, visible only at night, and playing their fantastic tricks amid the surrounding passions—the sorrow, the crime, the avarice, the love, the wrath, the luxury, the famine, that belong to the grosser dwellers of the earth. You are to be envied, Fanny."

"Not so; I am growing old."

"Old!" cried Saville: "ah, talk not of it! Ugh! ugh! Curse this cough! But hang politics; it always brings disagreeable reflections. Glad, my old pupil—glad am I to see that you still retain your august contempt for those foolish strugglers — insects splashing and panting in the vast stream of events,

which they scarcely stir, and in which they scarcely drop before they are drowned—"

"Or the fishes, their passions, devour them," said Godolphin.

"News!" cried Saville; "let us have real news; cut all the politics out of 'The Times,' Fanny, with your scissors, and then read the rest."

Fanny obeyed.

"'Fire in Marylebone!'"

"That's not news! Skip that."

"'Letter from *Radical*.'"

"Stuff! What else?"

"'Emigration: no fewer than sixty-eight—'"

"Hold! for Mercy's sake! What do I, just going out of the world, care for people only going out of the country? Here, child, give the paper to Godolphin; he knows exactly what interests a man of sense."

"'Sale of Lord Lysart's wines—'"

"Capital!" cried Saville: "*that's* news—*that's* interesting!"

Fanny's pretty hands returned to their knitting. When the wines had been discussed, the following paragraph was chanced upon:

"There is a foolish story going the round of the papers about Lord Grey and his vision: the vision is only in the silly heads of the inventors of the story, and the ghost is, we suppose, the apparition of Old Sarum. By-the-way, there is a celebrated fortune-teller or prophetess now in London, making much noise. We conclude the discomfited Tories will next publish *her* oracular discourses. She is just arrived in time to predict the passing of the Reform Bill, without any fear of being proved an impostor."

"Ah, by-the-by," said Saville, "I hear wonders of this sorceress. She dreams and divines with the most singular accuracy; and all the old women of both sexes flock to her in hackney-coaches, making fools of themselves to-day in order to be wise to-morrow. Have you seen her, Fanny?"

"Yes," replied the actress, very gravely: "and, in

sober earnest, she has startled me. Her countenance is so striking, her eyes so wild, and in her conversation there is so much enthusiasm, that she carries you away in spite of yourself. Do you believe in astrology, Percy?"

"I almost did once," said Godolphin, with a half sigh; "but does this female seer profess to choose Astrology in preference to cards? The last is the more convenient way of tricking the public."

"Oh, but this is no vulgar fortune-teller, I assure you," cried Fanny, quite eagerly: "she dwells much on magnetism; insists on the effect of your own imagination; discards all outward quackeries; and, in short, has either discovered a new way of learning the future, or revived some forgotten trick of deluding the public. Come and see her, some day, Godolphin."

"No, I don't like that kind of imposture," said Godolphin, quickly; and, turning away, he sank into a silent and gloomy revery.

CHAPTER LVII.

SUPERSTITION.—ITS WONDERFUL EFFECTS.

It was perfectly true that there had appeared in London a person of the female sex, who, during the last few years, had been much noted on the Continent for the singular boldness with which she promulgated the wildest doctrines, and the supposed felicity which had attended her vaticinations. She professed belief in all the dogmas that preceded the dawn of modern philosophy; and a strange, vivid, yet gloomy eloquence that pervaded her language, gave effect to theories which, while incomprehensible to the many, were alluring to the few. None knew her native country, although she was believed to come from the North of

Europe. Her way of life was lone, her habits eccentric; she sought no companionship; she was beautiful, but not of this earth's beauty; men admired, but courted not; she, at least, lived apart from the reach of human passions. In fact, the stranger Liehbur, for such was the name the prophetess was known by (and she assumed before it the French title of Madame), was not an impostor, but a fanatic: the chords of the brain were touched, and the sound they gave back was erring and imperfect. She was mad, but with a certain method in her madness; a cold, and preternatural, and fearful spirit abode within her, and spake from her lips; its voice froze herself, and she was more awed by her own oracles than her listeners themselves.

In Vienna and in Paris her renown was great, and even terrible; the greatest men in those capitals had consulted her, and spoke of her decrees with a certain reverence; her insanity thrilled them, and they mistook the cause. Besides, on the main, she was right in the principle she addressed: she worked on the imagination, and the imagination afterward fulfilled what she predicted. Every one knows what dark things may be done by our own fantastic persuasions; belief ensures the miracles it credits. Men dream they shall die within a certain hour; the hour comes, and the dream is realized. The most potent wizardries are less potent than fancy itself. Macbeth was a murderer, not because the witches predicted, but because their prediction aroused the thought of murder. And this principle of action the prophetess knew well: she appealed to that attribute common to us all, the foolish and the wise, and on that fruitful ground she sowed her soothsayings.

In London there are always persons to run after anything new, and Madame Liehbur became at once the rage. I myself have seen a minister hurrying from her door with his cloak about his face; and one of the coldest of living sages confesses that she told him what he believes, by mere human means, she could not have discovered. Delusion all! But what

age is free from it? The race of the nineteenth century boast their lights, but run as madly after any folly as their fathers in the eighth. What are the prophecies of St. Simon but a species of sorcery? Why believe the external more than the inner miracle?

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There were but few persons present at Lady Erpingham's, and when Radclyffe entered Madame Lichbur was the theme of the general conversation. So many anecdotes were told, so much that was false was mingled with so much that seemed true, that Lady Erpingham's curiosity was excited, and she resolved to seek the modern Cassandra with the first opportunity. Godolphin sat apart from the talkers, playing a quiet game at *écarté*. Constance's eyes stole ever and anon to his countenance: and when she turned at length away with a sigh, she saw that Radclyffe's deep and inscrutable gaze was bent upon her, and the proud countess blushed, although she scarce knew why.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE EMPIRE OF TIME AND OF LOVE.—THE PROUD CONSTANCE GROWN WEAK AND HUMBLE.—AN ORDEAL.

About this time the constitution of Lady Erpingham began to feel the effects of that life which, at once idle and busy, is the most exhausting of all. She suffered under no absolute illness; she was free from actual pain; but a fever crept over her at night, and a languid debility succeeded it the next day. She was melancholy and dejected; tears came into her eyes without a cause; a sudden noise made her tremble; *her nerves were shaken*—terrible disease, which marks a new epoch in life, which is the first token that our youth is about to leave us!

It is in sickness that we feel our true reliance on others, especially if it is of that vague and not dangerous character when those around us are not shamed or roused into attendance; when the care, and the soothing, and the vigilance are the result of that sympathy which true and deep love only feels. This thought broke upon Constance as she sat alone one morning in that mood when books cannot amuse, nor music lull, nor luxury sooth—the mood of an aching memory and a spiritless frame. Above her, and over the mantelpiece of her favourite room, hung that picture of her father which I have before described; it had been long since removed from Wendover Castle to London, for Constance wished it to be frequently in her sight. "Alas!" thought she, gazing upon the proud and animated brow that bent down upon her: "alas! though in a different sphere, *thy* lot, my father, has been *mine;* toil unrepaid, affection slighted, sacrifices forgotten; a *harder* lot in part; for thou hadst, at least, in thy stirring and magnificent career, continued excitement and perpetual triumph. But I, a woman, shut out by my sex from contest, from victory, am left only the thankless task to devise the rewards which others are to enjoy; the petty plot, the poor intrigue, the toil without the honour, the humiliation without the revenge; yet have I worked in thy cause, my father, and thou—thou, couldst thou see my heart, wouldst pity and approve me."

As Constance turned away her eyes, they fell on the opposite mirror, which reflected her still lofty but dimmed and faded beauty; the worn cheek, the dejected eye, those lines and hollows which tell the progress of years! There are certain moments when the time we have been forgetting makes its march suddenly apparent to our own eyes; when the change we have hitherto marked not stares upon us rude and abrupt; we almost fancy those lines, those wrinkles planted in a single hour, so unperceived have they been before. And such a moment was this to the beautiful Constance: she started at her own likeness, and turned

involuntarily from the unflattering mirror. Beside it, on her table, lay a locket, given her by Godolphin just before they married, and containing his hair: it was a simple trifle, and the simplicity seemed yet more striking amid the costly and modern jewels that were scattered round it. As she looked on it, her heart, all woman still, flew back to the day on which, whispering eternal love, he hung it round her neck. "Ah, happy days! would that they could return!" sighed the desolate schemer; and she took the locket, kissed it, and, softened by all the numberless recollections of the past, wept silently over it. "And yet," she said, after a pause, and wiping away her tears, "and yet this weakness is unworthy of me. Lone, sad, ill, broken in frame and spirit as I am, he comes not near me; I am nothing to him, nothing to any one in the wide world. My heart, my heart, reconcile thyself to thy fate! what thou hast been from my cradle, that shalt thou be to my grave. I have not even the tenderness of a child to look to: the future is all blank!"

Constance was yet half yielding to, half struggling with these thoughts, when Stainforth Radclyffe (to whom she was never denied) was suddenly announced. Time, which, sooner or later, repays perseverance, although in a deceitful coin, had brought to Radclyffe a solid earnest of future honours. His name had risen high in the science of his country; it was equally honoured by the many and the few; he had become a marked man—one of whom all predicted a bright hereafter. He had not yet, it is true, entered Parliament—usually the great arena in which English reputations are won—but it was simply because he had refused to enter it under the auspices of any patron; and his political knowledge, his depth of thought, and his stern, hard, and ambitious mind were not the less appreciated and acknowledged. Between him and Constance friendship had continued to strengthen, and the more so as their political sentiments were in a great measure the same, although originating in different causes—hers from passion, his from reflection.

Hastily Constance turned aside her face and brushed away her tears as Radclyffe approached; and then seeming to busy herself among some papers that lay scattered on her escritoire, and gave her an excuse for concealing in part her countenance, she said, with a constrained cheerfulness, "I am happy you are come to relieve my *ennui;* I have been looking over letters, written so many years ago that I have been forced to remember how soon I shall cease to be young—no pleasant reflection for any one, much less a woman."

"I am at a loss for a compliment in return, as you may suppose," answered Radclyffe; "but Lady Erpingham deserves a penance for even hinting at the possibility of being ever less charming than she is—so I shall hold my tongue."

"Alas!" said Constance, gravely, "how little, save the mere triumphs of youth and beauty, is left to our sex! How much, nay, how entirely, in all other and loftier objects, is our ambition walled in and fettered! The human mind must have its aim, its aspiring; how can your sex blame us, then, for being frivolous, when no aim, no aspiring, save those of frivolity, are granted us by society?"

"And is love frivolous?" said Radclyffe: "is the empire of the heart nothing?"

"Yes!" exclaimed Constance, with energy, "for the empire never lasts. We are slaves to the empire we would found; we wish to be loved, but we only succeed in loving too well ourselves. We lay up our all—our thoughts, hopes, emotions—all the treasure of our hearts—in one spot; and when we would retire from the deceits and cares of life, we find the sanctuary walled against us—we love, and are loved no longer!"

Constance had turned round with the earnestness of the feeling she expressed; and her eyes, still wet with tears, her flushed cheek, her quivering lip, struck to Radclyffe's heart more than her words. He rose involuntarily; his own agitation was marked; he moved several steps towards Constance, and then checked the impulse, and muttered indistinctly to himself.

"No," said Constance, mournfully, and scarcely heeding him, "it is in vain for *us* to be ambitious. We only deceive ourselves; we are not stern and harsh enough for the passion. Touch our affections, and we are recalled at once to the sense of our weakness; and I—I—would to God that I were an humble peasant girl, and not—not what I am!"

So saying, the lofty Constance sank down, overpowered with the bitterness of her feelings, and covered her face with her hands. Was Radclyffe a man that he could see this unmoved? that he could hear those beautiful lips breathe complaints for the want of love, and not acknowledge the love that burned at his own heart? Long, secretly, resolutely had he struggled against the passion for Constance which his frequent intercourse with her had fed, and which his consciousness that in her was the only parallel to himself that he had ever met with in her sex had first led him to form; and now lone, neglected, sad, this haughty woman wept over her unloved lot in his presence, and still he was not at her feet! He spoke not, moved not, but his breath heaved thick, and his face was as pale as death. He conquered himself. All within Radclyffe obeyed the idol he had worshipped, even before Constance; all within him, if ardent and fiery, was also high and generous. The acuteness of his reason permitted him no self-sophistries; and he would have laid his head on the block rather than breathe a word of that love which he knew, from the moment it was confessed, would become unworthy of Constance and himself.

There was a pause. Lady Erpingham, ashamed, confounded at her own weakness, recovered herself slowly and in silence. Radclyffe at length spoke, and his voice, at first trembling and indistinct, grew, as he proceeded, clear and earnest.

"Never," said he, "shall I forget the confidence your emotions have testified in my—my friendship; I am about to deserve it. Do not, my dear friend (let me so call you), do not forget that life is too short for

misunderstandings in which happiness is concerned. You believe that—that Godolphin does not repay the affection you have borne him: do not be angry, dear Lady Erpingham; I feel it indelicate in me to approach that subject, but my regard for you imboldens me. I know Godolphin's heart; he may seem light, neglectful, but he loves you as deeply as ever; he loves you entirely."

Constance, humbled as she was, listened in breathless silence; her cheek burned with blushes, and those blushes were at once to Radclyffe a torture and a reward.

"At this moment," continued he, with constrained calmness, "at this moment he fancies in you that very coldness you lament in him. Pardon me, Lady Erpingham, but Godolphin's nature is wayward, mysterious, and exacting. Have you consulted, have you studied it sufficiently? Note it well, sooth it; and if his love can repay you, you will be repaid. God bless you, dearest Lady Erpingham!"

In a moment more Radclyffe had left the apartment.

CHAPTER LIX.

CONSTANCE MAKES A DISCOVERY THAT TOUCHES AND ENLIGHTENS HER AS TO GODOLPLIN'S NATURE.—AN EVENT, ALTHOUGH IN PRIVATE LIFE, NOT WITHOUT ITS INTEREST.

If Constance most bitterly reproached herself, or, rather, her slackened nerves, her breaking health, that she had before another — that other, too, not of her own sex — betrayed her dependance upon even her husband's heart for happiness; if her conscience instantly took alarm at the error (and it was indeed a grave one) which had revealed to any man her domes-

tic griefs; yet, on the other hand, she could not control the wild thrill of delight with which she recalled those words that had so solemnly assured her she was still beloved by Godolphin. She had a firm respect in Radclyffe's penetration and his sincerity, and knew that he was one neither to deceive her nor be deceived himself: his advice, too, came home to her. Had she, indeed, with sufficient address, sufficient softness, insinuated herself into Godolphin's nature? Neglected herself, had she not neglected in return? She asked herself this question, and was never weary of examining her past conduct. That Radclyffe, the austere and chilling Radclyffe, entertained for her any feeling warmer than friendship, she never for an instant suspected; that suspicion alone would have driven him from her presence for ever. And although there had been a time, in his bright and exulting youth, when Radclyffe had not been without those arts which win, in the opposite sex, affection from aversion itself, those arts doubled, ay, a hundred fold in their fascination, would not have availed him with the pure but disappointed Constance, even had a sense of the right and wrong very different from the standard he *now* acknowledged permitted him to exert them. So that his was rather the sacrifice of impulse than of any triumph that impulse could afterward have gained him.

Many, and soft, and sweet were now the recollections of Constance. Her heart flew back to her early love among the shades of Wendover; to the first confession of the fair enthusiastic boy, when he offered at her shrine a mind, a genius, a heart capable of fruits which the indolence of after life and the lethargy of disappointed hope had blighted before their time.

If he was now so deaf to what she considered the nobler, because more stirring excitements of life, was she not in some measure answerable for the supineness? Had there not been a day in which he had vowed to toil, to labour, to sacrifice the very character of his mind for a union with her? Was she, after

all, was she right to adhere so rigidly to her father's dying words, and to that vow afterward confirmed by her own pride and bitterness of soul? She looked to her father's portrait for an answer; and that daring and eloquent face seemed, for the first time, cold and unanswering to her appeal.

In such meditations the hours passed, and midnight came on without Constance having quitted her apartment. She now summoned her woman, and inquired if Godolphin was at home. He had come in about an hour since, and, complaining of fatigue, had retired to rest. Constance again dismissed her maid and stole to his apartment. He was already asleep; his cheek rested on his arm, and his fair hair fell wildly over a brow that now worked under the influence of his dreams. Constance put the light softly down, and, seating herself beside him, watched over a sleep which, if it had come suddenly on him, was not the less unquiet and disturbed. At length he muttered, "Yes, Lucilla, yes; I tell you, you are avenged. I have not forgotten you! I have not forgotten that I betrayed, deserted you! but was it my fault? No, no! Yet I have not the less sought to forget it. These poor excesses, these chilling gayeties, were they not incurred for you? and now you come—you—ah, no!—spare me!"

Shocked and startled, Constance drew back. Here was a new key to Godolphin's present life, his dissipation, his thirst for pleasure. Had he indeed sought to lull the stings of conscience? And she, instead of soothing, of reconciling him to the past, had she left him alone to struggle with bitter and unresting thoughts, and to contrast the devotion of the one lost with the indifference of the one gained? She crept back to her own chamber to commune with her heart and be still.

"My dear Percy," said she, the next day, when he carelessly sauntered into her *boudoir* before he rode out, "I have a favour to ask of you."

"Who ever denied a favour to Lady Erpingham?"

"Not you, certainly; but my favour is a great one."

"It is granted."

"Let us pass the summer in ***shire."

Godolphin's brow grew clouded.

"At Wendover Castle?" said he, after a pause.

"We have never been there since our marriage," said Constance, evasively.

"Humph! as you will."

"It was the place," said Constance, "where you, Percy, first told me you loved!"

The tone of his wife's voice struck on the right chord in Godolphin's breast; he looked up, and saw her eyes full of tears, and fixed upon him.

"Why, Constance," said he, much affected, "who would have thought that you still cherished that remembrance!"

"Ah! when shall I forget it?" said Constance; "*then* you loved me!"

"And was rejected."

"Hush! but I believe now that I was wrong."

"No, Constance; you were wrong, for your own happiness, that the rejection was not renewed."

"Percy!"

"Constance!" and in the accent of that last word there was something that encouraged Constance, and she threw herself into Godolphin's arms, and murmured, "If I have offended, forgive me; let us be to each other what we once were."

Words like these from the lips of one in whom such tender supplication such feminine yearnings were not common, subdued Godolphin at once. He folded her in his arms, and, kissing her passionately, whispered, "Be always thus, Constance, and you will be more to me than ever."

CHAPTER LX.

THE REFORM BILL.—A VERY SHORT CHAPTER.

This reconciliation was not so short-lived as matters of the kind frequently are. There is a Chinese proverb which says, "How near are two hearts when there is no deceit between them!" And the misunderstanding of their mutual sentiments being removed, their affection became at once visible to each other. And Constance, reproaching herself for her former pride, mingled in her manner to her husband a gentle, even an humble sweetness, which, being exactly that he had most desired in her, was what most attracted him.

At this time Lord John Russell brought forward the Bill of Parliamentary Reform. Lady Erpingham was in the lantern of the House of Commons on that memorable night; like every one else, her feelings at first were all absorbed in surprise. She went home; she hastened to Godolphin's library. Leaning his head on his hand, that strange person, in the midst of events that stirred the destinies of Europe, was absorbed in the old subtleties of Spinosa. In the frank confidence of revived love, she put her hand upon his shoulder, and told him rapidly that news which was then on its way to terrify or to delight the whole of England.

"Will this charm *you*, dear Constance?" said he, kindly; "is it a blow to the party *you* hate and I sympathize with, or—"

"My father!" interrupted Constance, passionately, "would to Heaven he had seen this day! It was this system, the patron and the nominee system, that crushed, and debased, and killed him. And now I shall see that system destroyed!"

"So, then, my Constance will go over to the Whigs in earnest?"

"Yes, because I shall meet there truth and the people!"

Godolphin laughed gently at the French exaggeration of the saying, and Constance forgave him.

The fine ladies of London were a little divided as to the merits of the "Bill;" Constance was the first that declared in its favour. She was an important ally—as important, at least, as a woman can be. A bright spirit reigned in her eye; her step grew more elastic, her voice more glad. This was the happiest time of her life: she was happy in the renewal of her love, happy in the approaching triumph of her hate.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE SOLILOQUY OF THE SOOTHSAYER.—AN EPISODICAL MYSTERY, INTRODUCED AS A TYPE OF THE MANY THINGS IN LIFE THAT ARE NEVER ACCOUNTED FOR.—GRATUITOUS DEVIATIONS FROM OUR COMMON CAREER.

In Leicester Square there is a dim old house, which I have but this instant visited, in order to bring back more vividly to my recollection the wild and unhappy being who for some short time inhabited its oldfashioned and gloomy chambers.

In that house, at the time I now speak of, lodged the mysterious Liehbur. It was late at noon, and she sat alone in her apartment, which was darkened so as to exclude the broad and peering sun. There was no trick, nor sign of the fallacious art she professed, visible in the large and melancholy room. One or two books in the German language lay on the table beside which she sat; but they were of the recent poetry, and not of the departed dogmas, of the genius of that tongue. The enthusiast was alone; and with her hand supporting her chin, and her eyes fixed on va-

cancy, she seemed feeding in silence the thoughts that flitted to and fro athwart a brain which had for years lost its certain guide; a deserted mansion, whence the lord had departed, and where spirits not of this common life had taken up their haunted and desolate abode. And never was there a countenance better suited to the character which this singular woman had assumed. Rich, thick auburn hair was parted loosely over a brow in which the large and full temples would have betrayed to a phrenologist the great preponderance which the dreaming and the imaginative bore over the sterner faculties. Her eyes were deep, intense, but of the bright and wandering glitter which is so powerful in its effect on the beholder, because it betokens that thought which is not of this world, and inspires that fear, that sadness, that awe which few have looked on the face of the insane and not experienced. Her features were still noble, and of the fair Greek symmetry of the painter's Sibyl; but the cheeks were worn and hollow, and one bright spot alone broke their marble paleness; her lips were, however, full, and yet red, and, by their uncertain and varying play, gave frequent glimpses of teeth illustriously white, which, while contemplating the beauty of her face, aided—with somewhat of a fearful effect—the burning light of her strange eyes, and the vague, mystic expression of her abrupt and unjoyous smile. You might see, when her features were, as now, in a momentary repose, that her health was broken, and that she was not long sentenced to wander over that world where the soul had already ceased to find its home; but, the instant she spoke, her colour deepened, and the brilliant and rapid alternations of her countenance deceived the eye, and concealed the ravages of the worm that preyed within.

"Yes," said she, at last breaking silence, and soliloquizing in the English tongue, but with somewhat of a foreign accent; "yes, I am in his city—within a few paces of his home; I have seen him, I have heard him. Night after night—in rain, and in the

teeth of the biting winds, I have wandered round his home. Ay! and I could have raised my voice, and shrieked a warning and a prophecy that should have startled him from his sleep as the trumpet of the last angel! but I hushed the sound within my soul, and covered the vision with a thick silence. Oh, God! what have I seen, and felt, and known, since he last saw me! But we shall meet again; and, ere the year has rolled round, I shall feel the touch of his lips and die! *Die!* what calmness, what luxury in the word! The fiery burden of this dread knowledge I have heaped upon me, shuffled off; memory no more; the past, the present, the future, exorcised; and a long sleep, with bright dreams of a lulling sky, and a silver voice, and his presence!"

The door opened, and a black girl of about ten years old, in the costume of her Moorish tribe, announced the arrival of a new visiter. The countenance of Madame Liehbur changed at once into an expression of cold and settled calmness; she ordered the visiter to be admitted, and presently Stainforth Radclyffe entered the room.

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"Thou mistakest me and my lore," said the diviner; "I meddle not with the tricks and schemes of the worldly; I show the truth, not garble it."

"Pshaw!" said Radclyffe, impatiently; "this jargon cannot deceive me. You exhibit your skill for money; I ask one exertion of it, and desire you to name your reward. Let us talk after the fashion of this world, and leave that of the other to our dupes."

"Yet thou hast known grief too," said the diviner, musingly, "and those who have sorrowed ought to judge more gently of each other. Wilt thou try my art on thyself ere thou askest it for others?"

"Ay, if you could restore the dead to my dreams."

"I can!" replied the soothsayer, sternly.

Radclyffe laughed bitterly. "Away with this talk to me; or, if you would convince me, raise at once the spectre I desire to see!"

"And dost thou think, vain man," replied Liebbur, haughtily, "that I pretend to the power thou speakest of? Yes; but not as the impostors of old (dull and gross, appealing to outward spells, and spells wrought by themselves alone) affected to do. I can bring the dead before thee, but thou thyself must act upon thyself."

"Mummery! What would you drive at?"

"Wilt thou fast three days, and for three nights abstain from sleep, and then visit me once again?"

"No, fair deluder; such a preliminary is too much to ask of a Neophyte. Three days without food and three nights without sleep! Why, you would have to raise myself from the dead!"

"And canst thou," said the diviner, with great dignity, "canst thou hope that thou wouldst be worthy of a revelation from a higher world—that for thee the keys of the grave should unlock their awful treasure, and the dead return to life, when thou scruplest to mortify thy flesh and loosen the earthly bonds that cumber and chain the spirit? I will tell thee, that only as the soul detaches itself from the frame, can its inner and purer sense awaken, and the full consciousness of the invisible and divine things that surround it descend upon its powers."

"And what," said Radclyffe, startled more by the countenance and voice than the words themselves of the soothsayer, "what would you then do, supposing that I performed this penance?"

"Awaken to their utmost sense, even to pain and torture, the naked nerves of that Great Power thou callest the IMAGINATION; that Power which presides over dreams and visions; which kindles song, and lives in the heart of melodies; which inspired the Magian of the East and the Pythian voices, and in the storms and thunder of savage lands originated the notion of a God and the seeds of human worship; that vast presiding power which, to the things of mind, is what the Deity is to the universe itself—the Creator of all. I would awaken, I say, that power from its ac-

customed sleep, where, buried in the heart, it folds its wings, and lives but by fits and starts, unquiet but unaroused; and by that power thou wouldst see, and feel, and know, and through it only thou wouldst exist. So that it would be with thee as if the body were not; as if thou wert already all-spiritual, all-living. So thou wouldst learn in life that which may be open to thee after death; and so, soul might now, as hereafter, converse with soul, and revoke the past, and sail prescient down the dark tides of the future. A brief and fleeting privilege, but dearly purchased. Be wise and disbelieve it; be happy and reject it!"

Radclyffe was impressed, despite himself, by the solemn novelty of this language, and the deep mournfulness with which the soothsayer's last sentence died away.

"And how," said he, after a pause, "how, and by what arts, would you so awaken the imaginative faculty?"

"Ask not until the time comes for the trial," answered Liehbur.

"But can you awaken it in all? the dull, the unideal, as in the musing and exalted?"

"No! but the dull and unideal will not go through the necessary ordeal. Few besides those for whom Fate casts her great parts in life's drama ever come to that point when I can teach them the future."

"Do you mean that your chief votaries are among the great? Pardon me, I should have thought the most superstitious are to be found among the most ignorant and lowly."

"Yes; but they consult only what imposes on their credulity, without demanding stern and severe sacrifice of time and enjoyment, as I do. The daring, the resolute, the scheming, with their souls intent upon great objects and high dreams—those are the men who despise the charms of the moment, who are covetous of piercing the far future, who know how much of their hitherward career has been brightened, not by genius or nature, but some strange confluence of events, some

mysterious agency of fate. The great are always fortunate, and therefore mostly seekers into the decrees of fortune."

So great is the influence which enthusiasm, right or wrong, always exercises over us, that even the hard and acute Radclyffe—who had entered the room with the most profound contempt for the pretensions of the soothsayer, and partly from a wish to find materials for ridiculing a folly of the day; partly, it may be, from *the desire to examine* which belonged to his nature—began to consider in his own mind whether he should yield to his curiosity, now strongly excited, and pledge himself to the preliminary penance the diviner had ordained.

The soothsayer continued:

"The stars, and the clime, and the changing moon have power over us—why not? Do they not have influence over the rest of nature? But we can only unravel their more august and hidden secrets by giving full wing to the creative spirit which first taught us their elementary nature, and which, when released from earth, will have full range to wander over their brilliant fields. Know, in one word, the imagination and the soul are *one*, one indivisible and the same; on that truth rests all my lore."

"And if I followed your precepts, what other preliminaries would you enjoin?"

"Not until thou engagest to perform them will I tell thee more."

"I engage!"

"And swear?"

"I swear!"

The soothsayer rose—and—

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CHAPTER LXII.

IN WHICH THE COMMON LIFE GLIDES INTO THE STRANGE.—EQUALLY TRUE, BUT THE TRUTH NOT EQUALLY ACKNOWLEDGED.

It was on the night of this interview that Constance, coming into Godolphin's room, found him leaning against the wall, pale, and agitated, and almost insensible. "Good God, you are ill!" she exclaimed, and wound her arms round his neck. He looked at her long and wistfully, breathing hard all the time, until at length he seemed slowly to recover his self-possession, and, seating himself, motioned Constance to do the same. After a pause he said, clasping her hand,

"Listen to me, Constance. My health, I fear, is breaking; I am tormented by fearful visions; I am possessed by some magic influence. For several nights successively, before falling asleep, a cold tremour has gradually pervaded my frame; the roots of my hair stand on end; my teeth chatter; a vague horror seizes me; my blood seems turned to a solid substance, so curdled and stagnant is it. I strive to speak, to cry out, but my voice clings to the roof of my mouth; I feel that I have no longer power over myself. Suddenly, and in the very midst of this agony, I fall into a heavy sleep; then come strange bewildering dreams, with Volktman's daughter for ever presiding over them; but with a changed countenance, calm, unutterably calm, and gazing on me with eyes that burn into my soul. The dream fades; I wake with the morning, but exhausted and enfeebled. I have consulted physicians; I have taken drugs; but I cannot break the spell—the previous horror and the after-dreams. And just now, Constance, just now—you see the window is open to the park, the gate of the garden is unclosed—I happened to lift my eyes,

and lo! gazing upon me in the sickly moonlight, was the countenance of my dreams—Lucilla's, but how altered! Merciful Heaven! is it a mockery, or can the living Lucilla really be in England? and have these visions, these terrors, been part of that mysterious sympathy which united us ever, and which her father predicted should cease but with our lives?"

The emotions of Godolphin were so rarely visible, and in the present instance they were so unaffected and so roused, that Constance could not summon courage to sooth, to cheer him; she herself was alarmed and shocked, and glanced fearfully towards the window, lest the apparition he had spoken of should reappear. All without was still; not a leaf stirred on the trees in the Mall; no human figure was to be seen. She turned again to Godolphin, and kissed the drops from his brow, and pressed his cheek to her bosom.

"I have a presentiment," said he, "that something dreadful will happen shortly. I feel as if I were near some great crisis of my life, and as if I were about to step from the bright and palpable world into regions of cloud and darkness. Constance, strange misgivings as to my choice in my past life haunt and perplex me. I have sought only the present; I have abjured all toil, all ambition, and laughed at the future; my hand has plucked the rose-leaves, and now they lie withered in the grasp. My youth flies me; age scowls on me from the distance—an age of frivolities that I once scorned; yet—yet, had I formed a different creed, how much I might have done! But—but, out on this cant! My nerves are shattered, and I prate nonsense. Lend me your arm, Constance; let us go into the saloon, and send for music!"

And all that night Constance watched by the side of Godolphin, and marked in mute terror the convulsions that wrung his sleep, the foam that gathered to his lip, the cries that broke from his tongue. But she was rewarded when with the gray dawn he awoke, and, catching her tender and tearful gaze, flung himself upon her bosom, and bade God bless her for her love!

CHAPTER LXIII.

A MEETING BETWEEN CONSTANCE AND THE PROPHETESS.

A STRANGE suspicion had entered Constance's mind, and for Godolphin's sake she resolved to put it to the proof. She drew her mantle round her stately figure, put on a large disguising bonnet, and repaired to Madame Liehbur's house.

The Moorish girl opened the door to the countess; and her strange dress, her Afric hue and features, relieved by the long, glittering pendants in her ears, while they seemed suited to the eccentric reputation of her mistress, brought a slight smile to the proud lip of Lady Erpingham as she conceived them a part of the charlatanism practised by the soothsayer. She only replied to Lady Erpingham's question by an intelligent sign; and, running lightly up the stairs, conducted the guest into an anteroom, where she waited but for a few moments before she was admitted into Madame Liehbur's apartment.

The effect that the personal beauty of the diviner always produced on those who beheld her was not less powerful than usual on the surprised and admiring gaze of Lady Erpingham. She bowed her haughty brow with involuntary respect, and took the seat to which the enthusiast beckoned.

"And what, lady," said the soothsayer, in the foreign music of her low voice, "what brings thee hither? Wouldst thou gain, or hast thou lost, that gift our poor sex prizes so dearly beyond its value? Is it of love that thou wouldst speak to the interpreter of dreams and the priestess of the things to come!"

While the bright-eyed Liehbur thus spoke, the countess examined through her veil the fair face be-

fore her, comparing it with that description which Godolphin had given her of the sculptor's daughter, and her suspicions acquired new strength.

"I seek not that which you allude to," said Constance: "but of the future, although without any definite object, I would indeed like to question you. All of us love to pry into dark recesses hid from our view, and over which you profess the empire."

"Your voice is sweet, but commanding," said the oracle; "and your air is stately, as of one born in courts. Lift your veil, that I may gaze upon your face, and tell by its lines the fate your character has shaped for you."

"Alas!" answered Constance, "life betrays few of its past signs by outward token. If you have no wiser art than that drawn from the lines and features of our countenances, I shall still remain what I am now—an unbeliever in your powers."

"The brow, and the lip, and the eye, and the expression of each and all," answered Liehbur, "are not the lying index you suppose them."

"Then," rejoined Constance, "by those signs will I read your own destiny, as you would read mine."

The sibyl started, and waved her hand impatiently; but Constance proceeded.

"Your birth, despite your fair locks, was under a southern sky; you were nursed in the delusions you now teach; you were loved and left alone; you are in the country of your lover. Is it not so? Am I not an oracle in my turn?"

The mysterious Liehbur fell back in her chair; her lips apart and blanched, her hands clasped, her eyes fixed upon her visitant.

"Who are you?" she cried at last, in a shrill tone; "who, of my own sex, knows my wretched history? Speak, speak! in mercy speak! tell me more! convince me that you have but vainly guessed my secret, or that you have a right to know it!"

"Did not your father forsake for the blue skies of Rome his own colder shores?" continued Constance,

adopting the heightened and romantic tone of the one she addressed; "and Percy Godolphin—is that name still familiar to the ear of Lucilla Volktman?"

A loud, long shriek burst from the lips of the soothsayer, and she sank at once lifeless on the ground. Greatly alarmed, and repenting her own abruptness, Constance hastened to her assistance. She lifted the poor being, whom *she* unconsciously had once contributed so deeply to injure, from the ground: she loosened her dress, and perceived that around her neck hung a broad ivory necklace wrought with curious characters, and many uncouth forms and symbols. This evidence that, if deluding others, the soothsayer deluded herself also, touched and affected the countess; and while she was still busy in chafing the temples of Lucilla, the Moor, brought to the spot by that sudden shriek, entered the apartment. She seemed surprised and terrified at her mistress's condition, and poured forth, in some tongue unknown to Constance, what seemed to her a volley of mingled reproach and lamentation. She seized Lady Erpingham's hand, dashed it indignantly away, and, supporting herself the ashen cheek of Lucilla, motioned to Lady Erpingham to depart; but Constance, not easily accustomed to obey, retained her position beside the still insensible Lucilla; and now, by slow degrees and with quick and heavy sighs, the unfortunate daughter of Volktman returned to life and consciousness.

In assisting Lucilla, the countess had thrown aside her veil, and the eyes of the soothsayer opened upon that superb beauty which once to see was never to forget. Involuntarily she again closed her eyes and groaned audibly: and then, summoning all her courage, she withdrew her hand from Constance's clasp, and bade her Moorish handmaid leave them once more alone.

"So, then," said Lucilla, after a pause, "it is Percy Godolphin's wife—his English wife—who has come to gaze on the fallen, the degraded Lucilla; and yet," sinking her voice into a tone of ineffable and plain-

tive sweetness, "yet I have slept on his bosom, and been dear and sacred to him as thou! Go, proud lady, go! leave me to my mad, and sunken, and solitary state. Go!"

"Dear Lucilla!" said Constance, kindly, and striving once more to take her hand, "do not cast me away from you. I have long sympathized with your generous although erring heart—your hard and bitter misfortunes. Look on me only as your friend—nay, your sister, if you will. Let me persuade you to leave this strange and desultory life; choose your own home: I am rich to overflowing; all you can desire shall be at your command. *He* shall not know more of you, unless (to assuage the remorse that the memory of you does, I know, still occasion him) you will suffer him to learn, from your own hand, that you are well and at ease, and that you do not revoke your former pardon. Come, dear Lucilla!" and the arm of the generous and bright-souled Constance gently wound round the feeble frame of Lucilla, who now, reclining back, wept as if her heart would break. "Come, give me the deep, the grateful joy of thinking I can minister to your future comforts. I was the cause of all your wretchedness: but for me Godolphin would have been yours for ever—would probably, by marriage, have redressed your wrongs; but for me you would not have wandered an outcast over the inhospitable world. Let me in something repair what I have cost you. Speak to me, Lucilla!"

"Yes, I will speak to you," said poor Lucilla, throwing herself on the ground, and clasping with grateful warmth the knees of her gentle soother; "for long, long years—I dare not think how many—I have not heard the voice of kindness fall upon my ear. Among strange faces and harsh tongues hath my lot been cast; and if I have wrought out from the dreams of my young hours the course of this life (which you contemn, but not justly), it has been that I may stand alone and not dependant; feared and not despised. And now you, you whom I admire, and envy, and would reverence

more than living woman (for he loves you and deems you worthy of him), you, lady, speak to me as a sister would speak, and—and—" Here sobs interrupted Lucilla's speech; and Constance herself, almost equally affected, and finding it vain to attempt to raise her, knelt by her side, and, tenderly caressing her, sought to comfort her, even while she wept in doing so.

And this was a beautiful passage in the life of the lofty Constance; never did she seem more noble than when, thus lowly and humbling herself, she knelt beside the poor victim of her husband's love, and whispered to the diseased and withering heart tidings of comfort, charity, home, and a futurity of honour and of peace. But this was not a dream that could long lull the perturbed and erring brain of Lucilla Volktman. And when she recovered in some measure her self-possession, she rose, and, throwing back the wild hair from her throbbing temples, said, in a calm and mournful voice,

"Your kindness comes too late. I am dying fast—fast. All that is left me in the world are these very visions, this very power—call it delusion, if you will—from which you would tear me. Nay, look not so reproachfully and in such wonder. Do you not know that men have in poverty, sickness, and all outer despair clung to a creative spirit within—a world peopled with delusions—and called *it* POETRY? and that gift has been more precious to them than all that wealth and pomp could bestow? So," continued Lucilla, with fervid and insane enthusiasm, "so is this, *my* creative spirit, my imaginary world, my inspiration, what poetry may be to others. I may be mistaken in the truth of my belief. There are times when my brain is cool and my frame at rest, and I sit alone and think over the *real* past—when I feel my trust shaken and my ardour damped: but that thought does not console, but torture me; and I hasten to plunge once more among the charms, and spells, and mighty dreams that wrap me from my living self. Oh, lady! bright, and beautiful, and lofty as you are, there may come a time

when you can conceive that even madness may be a relief. For" (and here the wandering light burned brighter in the enthusiast's glowing eyes), "for, when the night is round us, and there is peace on earth, and the world's children sleep, it is a wild joy to sit alone and vigilant, and forget that we live and are wretched. The stars speak to us then with a wondrous and stirring voice; they tell us of the doom of men and the wreck of empires, and prophesy of the far events which they taught to the old Chaldeans. And then the winds, walking to and fro as they list, bid us go forth with them and hear the songs of the midnight spirits; for you know," she whispered with a smile, putting her hand upon the arm of the appalled and shrinking Constance, who now saw how hopeless was the ministry she had undertaken, "that this world is given up to two tribes of things that live and have a soul: the one bodily and palpable as we are; the other more glorious, but invisible to our dull sight—though I have seen them — dread solemn shadows, even in their mirth; the night is their season as the day is ours; they march in the moonbeams, and are borne upon the wings of the wind. And with them, and by their thoughts, I raise myself from what I am and have been. Ah, lady, wouldst thou take this comfort from me?"

"But," said Constance, gathering courage from the gentleness which Lucilla's insanity now wore, and trying to sooth, not contradict her in her present vein, "but in the country, Lucilla, in some quiet and sheltered nook, you might indulge these visions without the cares and uncertainty that must now perplex you; without leading this dangerous and roving life, which must at times expose you to insult, to annoyance, and discontent you with yourself."

"You are mistaken, lady," said the astrologer, proudly; "none know me who do not fear. I am powerful, and I hug my power—it comforts me: without it, what should I be? an abject, forsaken, miserable woman. No! that power I possess—to shake men's secret souls —even if it be a deceit—even if I should laugh at

them, not pity—reconciles me to myself and to the past. And I am not poor, madam," as, with the common caprice of her infirmity, an angry suspicion seemed to cross her; "I want no one's charity; I have learned to maintain myself. Nay, I could be even wealthy if I would!"

"And," said Constance, seeing that for the present she must postpone her benevolent intentions, "and he —Godolphin—you forgive him still?"

At that name it was as if a sudden charm had been whispered to the fevered heart of the poor fanatic: her head sank from its proud bearing; a deep, a soft blush coloured the wan cheek; her arms dropped beside her; she trembled violently; and, after a moment's silence, sank again on her seat and covered her face with her hands. "Ah!" said she, softly, "that word brings me back to my young days, when I asked no power but what love gave me over one heart: it brings me back to the blue Italian lake, and the waving pines, and our solitary home, and my babe's distant grave. Tell me," she cried, again starting up, "has he not spoken of me lately? has he not seen me in his dreams? have I not been present to his soul when the frame, torpid and locked, severed us no more, and in the still hours I charmed myself to his gaze? Tell me, has he not owned that Lucilla haunted his pillow? Tell me; and, if I err, my spells are nothing, my power is vanity, and I am the helpless creature thou wouldst believe me!"

Despite her reason and her firm sense, Constance half shuddered at these mysterious words, as she recalled what Percy had told her of his dreams the preceding evening, and the emotions she herself had witnessed in his slumbers when she watched beside his bed. She remained silent, and Lucilla regarded her countenance with a sort of triumph.

"My art, then, is not so idle as thou wouldst hold. But—hush!—last night I beheld him, not in spirit, but visibly, face to face; for I wander at times before his home (*his* home was once mine!); and he saw me,

and was smitten with fear; in these worn features he could recognise not the *living* Lucilla he had known. But go to him!—thou, his wife, his own—go to him; tell him—no, tell him *not* of me. He must not seek me; *we* must not hold parley together: for oh, lady" (and Lucilla's face became settled into an expression so sad, so unearthly sad, that no word can paint, no heart conceive its utter and solemn sorrow), "when we two meet again to commune, to converse—when once more I touch that hand—when once more I feel that beloved, that balmy breath, *my* last hour is at hand; and danger—imminent, dark, and deadly danger—clings fast to *him!*"

As she spoke Lucilla closed her eyes, as if to shut some horrid vision from her gaze; and Constance looked fearfully around, almost expecting some apparition at hand. Presently Lucilla, moving silently across the room, beckoned to the countess to follow: she did so: they entered another apartment: before a recess there hung a black curtain: Lucilla drew it slowly aside, and Constance turned her eyes from a dazzling light that broke upon them; when she again looked, she beheld a sort of glass-dial, marked with various quaint hieroglyphics and the figures of angels, beautifully wrought; but around the dial, which was circular, were ranged many stars, and the planets, set in due order. These were lighted from within by some chymical process, and burned with a clear and lustrous, but silver light. And Constance observed that the dial turned round, and that the stars turned with it, each in a separate motion; and in the midst of the dial were the hands as of a clock—that moved, but so slowly that the most patient gaze alone could observe the motion.

While the wondering Constance regarded this singular device, Lucilla pointed to one star that burned brighter than the rest; and below it, half way down the dial, was another, a faint and sickly orb, that, when watched, seemed to perform a much more rapid and irregular course than its fellows.

"The bright star is his," said she; "and yon dim and dying one is the type of mine. Note: in the course they both pursue, they must meet at last; and *when* they meet, the mechanism of the whole halts—the work of the dial is for ever done. These hands indicate hourly the progress made to that end; for it is the mimicry and symbol of mine. Thus do I number the days of my fate; thus do I know, even almost to a second, the period in which I shall join my Father that is in Heaven!

"And now," continued the maniac (though *maniac* is too harsh and decided a word for the dreaming wildness of Lucilla's insanity), as, dropping the curtain, she took her guest's hand and conducted her back into the outer room, "and now farewell! You sought me, and, I feel, only from kind and generous motives. *We* shall never meet more. Tell not your husband that you have seen me! He will know soon, too soon, of my existence: fain would I spare him that pang and," growing pale as she spoke, "that *peril:* but Fate forbids it. What is writ is writ: and who shall blot God's sentence from the stars, which are his book? Farewell! high thoughts are graved upon your brow: may they bless you; or, where they fail to bless, may they console and support. Farewell! I have not forgotten to be grateful, and I still dare to pray."

Thus saying, Lucilla kissed the hand she had held, and, turning hastily away, regained the room she had just left; and, locking the door, left the stunned and bewildered countess to depart from the melancholy abode. With faltering steps she quitted the chamber, and at the foot of the stairs the little Moor awaited her. To her excited fancy there was something eltrich and preternatural in the gaze of the young African, and the grin of her pearly teeth, as she opened the door to the visitant. Hastening to her carriage, which she had left at a corner of the square, the countess rejoiced when she gained it; and, throwing herself back on the luxurious cushion, felt as exhausted by this starry and weird incident in the epic of life's common

career, as if she had partaken of that overpowering inspiration which she now almost incredulously asked herself, as she looked forth on the broad day and the busy streets, if she had really witnessed.

CHAPTER LXIV.

LUCILLA'S FLIGHT.—THE PERPLEXITY OF LADY ERPINGHAM.—A CHANGE COMES OVER GODOLPHIN'S MIND.—HIS CONVERSATION WITH RADCLYFFE.—GENERAL ELECTION.—GODOLPHIN BECOMES A SENATOR.

No human heart ever beat with more pure and generous emotions than, when freed from the political fever that burned within her (withering, for the moment, the chastened and wholesome impulses of her nature), beat the heart of the queenly Constance. She sent that evening for the most celebrated physician in London; that polished and courtly man, who seems born for the maladies of the drawing room, but who, beneath so urbane a demeanour, conceals so accurate and profound a knowledge of the disorders of his unfortunate race. I say accurate and profound comparatively, for positive knowledge of pathology is what no physician in modern times and civilized countries really possesses. No man cures us—the highest art is not to kill! Constance, then, sent for this physician, and, as delicately as possible, related the unfortunate state of Lucilla, and the deep anxiety she felt for her mental and bodily relief. The physician promised to call the next day; he did so, late in the afternoon—Lucilla was gone. Strange, self-willed, mysterious, she came like a dream, to warn, to terrify, and to depart. They knew not whither she had fled, and her Moorish handmaid alone attended her.

Constance was deeply chagrined at this intelligence;

for she had already begun to build castles in the air, which poor Lucilla, with a frame restored and a heart at ease, and nothing left of the past but a soft and holy penitence, should inhabit. The countess, however, consoled herself with the hope that Lucilla would at least write to her, and mention her new place of residence: but days passed, and no letter came.

Constance felt that her benevolent intentions were doomed to be unfulfilled. She was now greatly perplexed whether or not to relate to Godolphin the interview that had taken place between her and Lucilla. She knew the deep, morbid, and painful interest which the memory of this wild and visionary creature created in Godolphin; and she trembled at the feelings she might reawaken by even a faint picture of the condition and mental infirmities of her whose life he had so darkly shadowed. She resolved, therefore, at all events for the present, and until every hope of discovering Lucilla once more had expired, to conceal the meeting that had occurred. And in this resolve she was strengthened by perceiving that Godolphin's mind had become gradually calmed from its late excitement, and that he had begun to consider, or, at least, appeared to consider, the apparition of Lucilla at his window as the mere delusion of a heated imagination. His nights grew once more tranquil, and freed from the dark dreams that had tormented his brain; and even the cool and unimaginative Constance could scarcely divest herself of the wild fancy that, when Lucilla was near, a secret and preternatural sympathy between Godolphin and the reader of the stars had produced that influence over his nightly dreams, which paled, and receded, and vanished as Lucilla departed from the actual circle in which he lived.

It was at this time, too, that a change was perceptible in Godolphin's habits, and crept gradually over the character of his thoughts. Dissipation ceased to allure him, the light wit of his parasites palled upon his ear; magnificence had lost its gloss, and the same fastidious, exacting thirst for the ideal, which had disappointed

him in the better objects of life, began now to discontent him with its glittering pleasures.

The change was natural, and the causes not difficult to fathom. The fact was, that Godolphin had now arrived at that period of existence when a man's character is almost invariably subject to great change; the crisis in life's fever when there is a new turn in our fate, and our moral death or regeneration is sealed by the silent wavering, the solemn decision of the HOUR! Arrived at the confines of middle age, there is an outward innovation of the whole system; unlooked-for symptoms break forth in the bodily, unlooked-for symptoms in the mental frame. It happened to Godolphin that, at this critical period, a chance, a circumstance, a straw, had reunited his long interrupted but never stifled affections to the image of his beautiful Constance. The reign of passion, the magic of those sweet allusions, that ineffable yearning which possession mocks, although it quells at last, were indeed for ever over; but a friendship more soft and genial than exists in any relation save that of husband and wife, had sprung up, almost as by a miracle (so sudden was it), between breasts for years divided. And the experience of those years had taught Godolphin how frail and unsubstantial had been all the other ties he had formed. He wondered, as, sitting alone with Constance, her tenderness recalled the past, her wit enlivened the present, and *his* imagination still shed a glory and a loveliness over the future, that he had been so long insensible to the blessing of that communion which he now experienced. He did not perceive, what in fact was the case, that the tastes and sympathies of each, blunted by that disappointment which is the child of experience, were more willing to concede somewhat to the tastes and sympathies of the other: that Constance gave a more indulgent listening to his beautiful refinements of an ideal and false epicurism; that he, smiling still, smiled with kindness, not with scorn, at the sanguine politics, the worldly schemes, and the rankling memories of the intriguing Constance. For-

tunately, too, for her, the times were such that men who never before dreamed of political interference were roused and urged into the mighty conflux of battling interests, which left few moderate, and none neuter. Every *coterie* resounded with political war-cries; every dinner rang, from soup to the coffee, with the merits of *the bill:* wherever Godolphin turned for refuge, Reform still assailed him; and, by degrees, the universal feeling, that was at first ridiculed, was at last, although reluctantly, admitted by his mind.

"Why," said he, one day, musingly, to Radclyffe, whom he met in the old Green Park (for, since the conversation recorded between Radclyffe and Constance, the former came little to Erpingham House)—"why should I not try a yet untried experiment? Why should I not live like others in their graver as in their lighter pursuits? I confess, when I look back to the years I have spent in England, I feel that I calculated erroneously. I chalked out a plan—I have followed it rigidly. I have lived for self, for pleasure, for luxury; I have summoned wit, beauty, even wisdom around me. I have been the creator of a magic circle, but to the magician himself the magic was tame and ignoble. In short, I have dreamed, and am awake. Yet what course of life should supply this which I think of deserting? Shall I go once more abroad, and penetrate some untravelled corner of the earth? Shall I retire into the country, *and write*, draining my mind of the excitement that presses on it; or, lastly, shall I plunge with my contemporaries into the great gulf of actual events, and strive, and fret, and struggle? or—in short, Radclyffe, you are a wise man; advise me!"

"Alas!" answered Radclyffe, "it is of no use advising one to be happy who has no object beyond himself. Either enthusiasm, or utter mechanical coldness, is necessary to reconcile men to the cares and mortifications of life. You must feel nothing, or you must feel for others. Unite yourself to a great object; see its goal distinctly; cling to its course courageously; hope for its triumph sanguinely; and on its majestic progress

you sail, as in a ship, agitated indeed by the storms, but unheeding the breeze and the surge that would appal the individual effort. The larger public objects make us glide smoothly and unfelt over our minor private griefs. To be happy, my dear Godolphin, you must forget yourself. Your refining and poetical temperament preys upon your content. Learn benevolence —it is the only cure to a morbid nature."

Godolphin was greatly struck by this answer of Radclyffe; the more so, as he had a deep faith in the unaffected sincerity and the calculating wisdom of his adviser. He looked hard in Radclyffe's face, and, after a pause of some moments, replied slowly, "I believe you are right, after all; and I have learned, in a few short sentences, the secret of a discontented life."

Godolphin would have sought other opportunities of conversing with Radclyffe, but events soon parted them. Parliament was dissolved! What an historical event is recorded in those words! The moment the king consented to that measure, the whole series of subsequent events became, to an ordinary prescience, clear as in a mirror. Parliament dissolved in the heat of the popular enthusiasm, a majority, a great majority of Reformers was sure to be returned.

Constance perceived at a glance the whole train of consequences issuing from that one event; perceived and exulted. A glory had gone for ever from the party she abhorred. Her father was already avenged. She heard his scornful laugh ring forth from the depths of his forgotten grave!

London emptied itself at once. England was one election. Godolphin remained almost alone. For the first time a sense of littleness crept over him; a feeling of insignificance, which wounded and galled his vain nature. In these great struggles he was nothing. The admired, the cultivated, the *spirituel*, the splendid Godolphin, sank below the commonest adventurer, the coarsest brawler; yea, the humblest freeman, who felt his stake in the state, joined the canvass, swelled the cry, and helped in the mighty battle between old things and new, which was so resolutely begun. This feel-

ing gave an impetus to the growth of the new aspirings he had already suffered his mind to generate; and Constance marked, with vivid delight, that he now listened to her plans with interest, and examined the political field with a curious and searching gaze.

But she was soon condemned to a disappointment proportioned to her delight. Though Godolphin had hitherto taken no interest in party politics, his prejudices, his feelings, his habits of mind were all the reverse of democratic. When he once began to examine the bearings of the momentous question that agitated England, he was not slow in coming to conclusions which threatened to produce a permanent disagreement between Constance and himself.

"You wish me to enter Parliament, my dear Constance," said he, with his quiet smile; "it would be an experiment dangerous to the union re-established between us. I should vote against your Bill."

"You!" exclaimed Constance, with warmth. "Is it possible that you can sympathize with the fears of a selfish oligarchy—with the cause of the merchants and traffickers of the plainest right of a free people—the right to select their representatives?"

"My dear Constance," returned Godolphin, "my whole theory of government is aristocratic. The right of the people to choose representatives!—you may as well say the right of the people to choose kings, or magistrates, and judges—or clergymen and archbishops! The people have, it is true, the abstract and original right to choose all these, and every year to chop and change them as they please. But the people, very properly, in all states mortgage their elementary rights for one catholic and practical right—the right to be well governed. It *may* be no more to the advantage of the state that the people (that is, the majority, the populace) should elect, uncontrolled, all the members of the House of Commons, than that they should elect all the pastors of their religion. The sole thing we have to consider is, will they be better governed?"

"Unquestionably," said Constance.

"Unquestionably! Well, *I* question it. I foresee a more even balance of parties—nothing more. When parties are evenly balanced, states tremble. In good government there should be somewhere sufficient power to carry on, not unexamined, but at least with vigour, the different operations of government itself. In free countries, therefore, one party ought to preponderate sufficiently over the other. If it do not—all the state measures are crippled, delayed, distorted, and the state languishes while the doctors dispute as to the medicines to be applied to it. You will find by your Bill, not that the Tories are destroyed, but the Whigs and the Radicals strengthened; the Lords not crushed, but the Commons in a state to contest with them. Hence party battles upon catchwords—struggles between the two chambers for things of straw. You, who desire progress and movement, will find the real affairs of this great artificial empire in its trade—commerce—colonies—internal legislation—standing still while the Whigs and the Tories pelt each other with the quibbles of faction. No—I should vote against your Bill! I am not for *popular* governments, though I like *free* states. All the advantages of democracy seem to me more than counterbalanced by the sacrifice of the peace and tranquillity, the comfort and the grace, the dignity and the charities of life that democracies usually entail. If the object of men is to live happily—not to strive and to fret—not to make money in the market-place, and call each other rogues on the hustings, who would not rather be a German than an American? I own I regret to differ with you. For—but no matter—"

"For!—what were you about to say?"

"For, then, since you must know it, I am beginning to feel interest in these questions—excitement is contagious. And, after all, if a man really deem his mother country in some danger, inaction is not philosophy, but a species of parricide. But to think of the daily and hourly pain I should occasion to you, my beloved

and ardent Constance—by shocking all your opinions, counteracting all your schemes, working against objects which your father's fate and your early associations have so singularly made duties in your eyes—to do all this is a patriotism beyond me. Let us glide out of this whirlpool, and hoist sail for some nook in the country, where we can hear gentler sounds than the roar of the democracy."

Constance sighed, and suffered Godolphin to quit her in silence. But her generous heart was touched by his generosity. This is one of the great curses of a woman who aspires to a man's part of political controversy. If the man choose to act, the woman, with all her wiles, her intrigues, her arts, is powerless. If Godolphin were to enter Parliament a Tory, the great Whig rendezvous of Erpingham House was lost, and Constance herself a cipher—and her father's wrongs forgotten, and the stern purpose of her masculine career baffled at the very moment of success. She now repented that she had ever desired to draw Godolphin's attention to political matters. She wondered at her own want of foresight. How, with his love for antiquity—his predilections for the elegant and the serene—his philosophy of the "Rose-garden"—could she ever have supposed that he would side with the bold objects and turbulent will of a popular party in a stormy crisis!

The subject was not renewed. But she had the pain of observing that Godolphin's manner was altered; he took pleasure in none of his old hobbies; he was evidently dissatisfied with himself. In fact, it is true that he, for the first time in his life, felt that there is a remorse to the mind as well as to the soul, and that a man of genius cannot be perpetually idle, without, as he touches on the middle of his career, looking to the past with some shame, and to the future with some ambition. One evening, when he had sat by the open window in a thoughtful and melancholy, almost morose silence for a considerable time, Constance, after a violent struggle with herself, rose suddenly and fell on his neck.

"Forgive me, Percy," she said, unable to suppress her tears, "forgive me—it is past—I have no right that you, so superior to myself, should be sacrificed to my —my *prejudices* you would call them—so be it. Is it for your wife to condemn you to be inglorious? No, no, dear Godolphin, fulfil your destiny; you are born for high objects. Be active, be distinguished, and I will ask no more!"

John Vernon, in that hour you were forgotten. Who among the dead can ever hope for fidelity when love to the living invites a woman to betray!

"My sweet Constance," said Godolphin, drawing her to his heart, and affected in proportion as he appreciated all that in that speech his wife gave up for his sake—the all, far more than the lovely person, the splendid wealth, the lofty rank that she had brought to his home—"My sweet Constance, do not think I will take advantage of words so generously but hastily spoken. Time enough hereafter to think of differences between us. At present, let us indulge only the luxury of the new love—the holiness of the new nuptials—that have made us as one being. Perhaps this restlessness, so unusual to me, will pass away; let us wait a while. At present 'Sparta has many a worthier son.' One other year, one sweet summer of the private life we have too much suffered to glide away, enjoyed, and then we will see whether the harsh realities of ambition be worth either a concession or a dispute. Let us go into the country—to-morrow, if you will."

And, as Constance was about to answer, he sealed her lips with his kiss.

But Lady Erpingham was not one of those who waver in what they deem a duty. She passed the night in stern and sleepless commune with herself; she was aware of all that she hazarded, all that she renounced: she was even tortured by scruples as to the strange oath that had almost unsexed her. Still, in spite of all, she felt that nothing would excuse her in suffering that gifted and happy intellect, now awa-

kened from the sleep of the Sybarite, to fall back into its lazy and effeminate repose. She had no right to doom a human soul to rot away in its clay. Perhaps, too, she hoped, as all polemical enthusiasts do, that Godolphin, once aroused, would soon become her convert. Be that as it may, she delayed, on various pretences, their departure from London. She went secretly the next day to one of the proprietors of the close boroughs, the existence of which was about to be annihilated, and a few days afterward Godolphin received a letter informing him that he had been duly elected member for ****. I will not say what were his feelings at these tidings. Perhaps, such is man's proud and wayward heart, he felt shame to be so outdone by Constance.

CHAPTER LXV.

NEW VIEWS OF A PRIVILEGDD ORDER.—THE DEATH-BED OF AUGUSTUS SAVILLE.

This event might indeed have been an era in the life of Percy Godolphin, had that life been spared to a more extended limit than it was; and yet, so long had his ambition been smoothed and polished away by his peculiarities of thought, and so little was his calm and indifferent tone of mind suited to the hot contests and nightly warfare of parliamentary politics, that it is not probable he would ever have won a continuous and solid distinction in a career which requires either obtuseness of mind or enthusiasm of purpose to encounter the repeated mortifications and failures which the most brilliant *débutant* ordinarily endures. As it was, however, it produced a grave and solemn train of thought in Godolphin's breast. He mused much over his past life, and the musing did not satisfy him. He

felt like one of those recorded in physiological history who have been in a trance for years; and now, slowly awakening, he acknowledged the stir and rush of revived but confused emotions. Nature, perhaps, had intended Godolphin for a poet; for, with the exception of the love of glory, the poetical characteristics were rife within him; and over his whole past existence the dimness of unexpressed poetical sensation had clung and hovered. It was this which had deadened his soul to the active world, and wrapped him in the land of dreams; it was this which had induced that vague and restless dissatisfaction with the actual which had brought the thirst for the ideal; it was this which had made him fastidious in love, repining in pleasure, magnificent in luxury, seeking and despising all things in the same breath. There are many, perhaps, of this sort, who, having the poet's nature, have never found the poet's vent to his emotions; have wandered over the visionary world without chancing to discover the magic wand that was stored within the dark chamber of their mind, and would have reduced the visions into shape and substance. Alas! what existence can be more unfulfilled than that of one who has the soul of the poet and not the skill? who has the susceptibility and the craving, not the consolation or the reward?

But if this cloud of dreamlike emotion had so long hung over Godolphin, it began now to melt away from his heart; a clearer and distincter view of the larger objects of life lay before him; and he felt that he was standing, half stunned and passive, in the great crisis of his fate.

The day was now fixed for their departure to Wendover, when Saville was taken alarmingly ill; Godolphin was sent for. He found the *soi-disant* Epicurean at the point of death, but in perfect possession of his senses. The scene around him was emblematic of his life: save Godolphin, not a friend was by. Saville had some dozen or two of natural children—where were they? He had abandoned them to their fate: he knew not of their existence, nor they of

his death. Lonely in his selfishness was he left to breathe out the small soul of a man of *bon ton!* But I must do Saville the justice to say, that if he was without the mourners and the attendants that belong to natural ties, he did not require them. His was no whimpering exit from life: the Champagne was drained to the last drop; and Death, like the true boon companion, was about to shatter the empty glass.

"Well, my friend," said Saville, feebly, but pressing with weak fingers Godolphin's hand, "well, the game is up, the lights are going out, and presently the last guest will depart, and all be darkness!" Here the doctor came to the bedside with a cordial. The dying man, before he took it, fixed upon the leech an eye which, although fast glazing, still retained something of its keen, searching shrewdness.

"Now tell me, my good sir, how many hours more can you keep in this—this breath?"

The doctor looked at Godolphin.

"I understand you," said Saville; "you are shy on these points. Never be shy, my good fellow; it is inexcusable after twenty: besides, it is a bad compliment to my nerves—a gentleman is prepared for every event. Sir, it is only a *roturier* whom death, or anything else, takes by surprise. How many hours, then, can I live?"

"Not many, I fear, sir: perhaps until daybreak."

"*My* day breaks about twelve o'clock P.M.," said Saville, as dryly as his gasps would let him. "Very well; give me the cordial; don't let me go to sleep—I don't want to be cheated out of a minute. So, so! I am better. You may withdraw, doctor. Let my spaniel come up. Bustle, Bustle! poor fellow! poor fellow! Lie down, sir! be quiet! And now, Godolphin, a few words in farewell. I always liked you greatly; you know you were my *protégé*, and you have turned out well. You have not been led away by the vulgar *bourgeois* passions of politics, and place, and power. You have had power over power itself; you have not office, but you have fashion. You have made the greatest match in England: very prudently not marrying Con-

stance Vernon, very prudently marrying Lady Erpingham. You are at the head and front of society; you have excellent taste, and spend your wealth properly. All this must make your conscience clear—a wonderful consolation! Always keep a sound conscience; it is a great blessing to me in this hour, for I have played my part decently—eh? I have enjoyed life as much as so dull a possession can be enjoyed; I have loved, gamed, drunk, but I have never lost my character as a gentleman: thank Heaven, I have no remorse of that sort! Follow my example to the last, and you will die as easily. I have left you my correspondence and my journal: you may publish them if you like; if not, burn them. They are full of amusing anecdotes; but I don't care for fame, as you well know—especially posthumous fame. Do as you please, then, with my literary remains. Take care of my dog—'tis a good creature; and let me be quietly buried. No bad taste—no ostentation—no epitaph. I am very glad I die before the d—d Revolution that must come: I don't want to take wine with the member for Holborn Bars. I am a type of a system: I expire before the system: my death is the herald of its fall."

With these expressions—not continuously uttered, but at short intervals—Saville turned away his face: his breathing became thick: he fell into the slumber he had deprecated: and, after about an hour's silence, died away as insensibly as an infant. *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

The first living countenance beside the death-bed on which Godolphin's eye fell was that of Fanny Millinger; she (who had been much with Saville during his latter days, for her talk amused him, and her good-nature made her willing to amuse any one) had been, at his request, summoned also with Godolphin at the sudden turn of his disease. She was at the theatre at the time, and had only just arrived when the deceased had fallen into his last sleep. There, silent and shocked, she stood by the bed, opposite Godolphin. She had not stayed to change her stage-dress;

and the tinsel and mock jewels glittered on the revolted eye of her quondam lover. What a type of the life just extinguished! What a satire on its mountebank artificialities!

Some little time after she joined Godolphin in the desolate apartment below. She put her hand in his, and her tears—for she wept easily—flowed fast down her cheeks, washing away the lavish rouge which imperfectly masked the wrinkles that Time had lately begun to sow on a surface Godolphin had remembered so fair and smooth.

"Poor Saville!" said she, falteringly; "he died without a pang. Ah! he had the best temper possible."

Godolphin sat by the writing-table of the deceased, shading his brow with the hand which the actress left disengaged.

"Fanny," said he, bitterly, after a pause, "the world is indeed a stage. It has lost a consummate actor, though in a small part."

The saying was wrung from Godolphin, and was not said unkindly, though it seemed so, for he too had tears in his eyes.

"Ah," said she, "the playhouse has indeed taught us, in our youth, many things which the real world could not teach us better."

"Life differs from the play only in this," said Godolphin, some time afterward; "it has no plot: all is vague, desultory, unconnected, till the curtain drops with the mystery unsolved."

Those were the last words that Godolphin ever addressed to the actress.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE JOURNEY AND THE SURPRISE.—A WALK IN THE SUMMER NIGHT.—THE STARS AND THE ASSOCIATION THAT MEMORY MAKES WITH NATURE.

This event detained Godolphin some days longer in town. He saw the last rites performed to Saville, and he was present at the opening of the will.

As in life Saville had never lent a helping hand to the distressed, as he had mixed with the wealthy only, so now to the wealthy only was his wealth devoted. The rich Godolphin was his principal heir; not a word was even said about his illegitimate children, not an inquiry ordained towards his poor relations. In this, as in all the formula of his will, Saville followed the prescribed customs of the world.

Fast went the panting steeds that bore Constance and Godolphin from the desolate city. Bright was the summer sky, and green looked the smiling fields that lay on either side their road. Nature was awake and active. What a delicious contrast to the scenes of art they left behind! Constance exerted herself to the utmost to cheer the spirits of her companion, and succeeded: in the small compass which confined them together, their conversation flowed in confidence and intimate affection. Not since the first month of their union had they talked with less reserve and more entire love; only there was this difference in their topics—they then talked of the future only, they now talked more of the past. They uttered many a fond regret over their several faults to each other; and, with clasped hands, congratulated themselves on their present reunion of heart. They allowed how much all things independent of affection had deceived them, and no longer exacting so much from love, they felt

its real importance. Ah, why do all of us lose so many years in searching after happiness, but never inquiring into its nature! We are like one who collects the books of a thousand tongues, and, knowing not their language, wonders why they do not delight him!

But still athwart the mind of Constance one dark image would ever and anon obtrude itself; the solitary and mystic Lucilla, with her erring brain and forlorn fortune, was not even in happiness to be forgotten. There were times, too, in that short journey, when she felt the tale of her interview with that unhappy being rise to her lips; but ever, when she looked on the countenance of Godolphin, beaming with more heartfelt and homeborn gladness than she had seen for years, she could not bear the thought of seeing it darkened by the pain her story would inflict; and she shrank from imbittering moments so precious to her heart.

All her endeavours to discover Lucilla had been in vain; but an unquiet presentiment that at any moment that discovery might be made, perhaps in the presence of Godolphin, constantly haunted her, and she even now looked painfully forth at each inn where they changed horses, lest the sad, stern features of the soothsayer should appear, and break that spell of happy quiet which now lay over the spirit of Godolphin.

It was towards the evening that their carriage slowly wound up a steep and long ascent. The sun yet wanted an hour to its setting; and at their right, its slant and mellowed beams fell over rich fields, green with the prodigal luxuriance of June, and intersected by hedges from which, proud and frequent, the oak and elm threw forth their lengthened shadows. On their left, the grass less fertile, and the spaces less enclosed, were whitened with flocks of sheep; and far and soft came the bleating of the lambs upon the ear. They saw not the shepherd nor any living form; but from between the thicker groups of trees, the chimneys of peaceful cottages peered forth, and gave to the pastoral

serenity of the scene that still and tranquil aspect of life which alone suited it. The busy wheel in the heart of Constance was at rest, and Godolphin's soul, steeped in the luxury of the present hour, felt that delicious happiness which would be heaven could it *outlive* the hour.

"My Constance," whispered he, "why, since we return at last to these scenes, why should we ever leave them? Amid them let us recall our youth!" Constance sighed, but with pleasure, and pressed Godolphin's hand to her lips.

And, now they had gained the hill, a sudden colour flushed over Godolphin's cheek.

"Surely," said he, "I remember this view. Yonder valley! This is not the road to Wendover Castle; this—my father's home!—the same, and not the same!"

Yes! Below, basking in the western light, lay the cottage in which Godolphin's childhood had been passed. There was the stream rippling merrily; there the broken and fern-clad turf, with "its old hereditary trees;" but the ruins! the shattered arch, the mouldering tower, were left indeed; but new arches, new turrets had arisen, and so dexterously blended with the whole that Godolphin might have fancied the hall of his forefathers restored; not, indeed, in the same vast proportions and cumbrous grandeur as of old, but still alike in shape and outline, and such even in size as would have contented the proud heart of its last owner. Godolphin's eyes turned inquiringly to Constance.

"It should have been more consistent with its ancient dimensions," said she; "but then it would have taken half our lives to have built it."

"But this must have been the work of years."

"It was."

"And *your* work, Constance?"

"For you."

"And it was for this that you hesitated when I asked you to consent to raising the money for the purchase of Lord ——'s collection?"

"Yes: am I forgiven?"

"Dearest Constance," said Godolphin, flinging his arms around her, "how have I wronged you! During those very years, then, of our estrangement—during those very years I thought you indifferent, you were silently preparing this noble revenge on the injury I did you. Why, why did I not know this before? Why did you not save us both from so long a misunderstanding of each other?"

"Dearest Percy, I was to blame; but I always looked to this hour as to a pleasure of which I could not bear to rob myself. I always fancied that when this task was finished, and you could witness it, you would feel how uppermost you were always in my thoughts, and forgive me many faults from that consideration. I knew that I was executing your father's great wish; I knew that you always, although unconsciously, perhaps, sympathized in that wish. I only grieve that, as yet, it has been executed so imperfectly."

"But how," continued Godolphin, gazing on the new pile as they now neared the entrance, "how was it this never reached my ears through other quarters?"

"But it did, Percy; don't you remember our country neighbour, Dartmour, complimenting you on your intended improvements, and you fancied it was irony, and turned your back on the discomfited squire?"

They now drove under the gates surmounted with Godolphin's arms, and in a few minutes more they were within the renovated halls of the Priory.

Perhaps it was impossible for Constance to have more sensibly touched and flattered Godolphin than by this surprise; it affected him far more than the political concession which to her had been so profound a sacrifice; for his early poverty had produced in him somewhat of that ancestral pride which the poor only can gracefully wear; and although the tie beween his father and himself had not possessed much endearment, yet he had often, with the generosity that belonged to him, regretted that his parent had not survived to share in his present wealth, and to devote some portion of it

to the realization of those wishes which he had never been permitted to consummate. Godolphin, too, was precisely of a nature to appreciate the delicacy of Constance's conduct, and to be deeply penetrated by the thought that, while he was following a career so separate from hers, she, in the midst of all her ambitious projects, could pause to labour, unthanked and in concealment, for the delight of this hour's gratification to him: the delicacy and the forethought affected him the more, because they made not a part of the ordinary character of the high and absorbed ambition of Constance. He did not thank her much by words, but his looks betrayed all he felt, and Constance was overpaid.

Although the new portion of the building was necessarily not extensive, yet each chamber was of those grand proportions which suited the magnificent taste of Godolphin, and harmonized with the ancient ruins. Constance had shown her tact by leaving the ruins themselves (which it was profane to touch) unrestored; but so artfully were those connected with the modern addition, and thence with the apartments in the cottage, which she had not scrupled to remodel, that an effect was produced from the whole far more splendid than many Gothic buildings of greater extent and higher pretensions can afford. Godolphin wandered delightedly over the whole, charmed with the taste and judgment which presided over even the nicest arrangement.

"Why, where," said he, struck with the accurate antiquity of some of the details, "where learned you all these minutiæ? You are as wise as Hope himself upon cornices and tables."

"I was forced to leave these things to others," answered Constance; "but I took care that they possessed the necessary science."

The night was exceedingly beautiful, and they walked forth under the summer moon among those grounds in which Constance had first seen Godolphin. They stood by the very rivulet, they paused on the very spot!

On the murmuring bosom of the wave floated many a water-flower; and now and then a sudden splash, a sudden circle in the shallow stream, denoted the leap of the river tyrant on his prey. There was a universal odour on the soft air; that delicate, that ineffable fragrance belonging to those midsummer nights which the rich English poetry might well people with Oberon and his fairies; the bat wheeled in many a ring along the air; but the gentle light bathed all things, and robbed his wanderings of the gloomier associations that belong to them; and ever and ever, the busy moth darted to and fro among the flowers, or, misled upward by the stars, whose beam allured it, wandered, like Desire after Happiness, in search of that light it might never reach. And those stars still, with their soft, unspeakable eyes of love, looked down upon Godolphin as of old, when, by the Italian lake, he roved with her for whom he had become the world itself. No, not now, nor ever, could he gaze upon those wan, mysterious orbs, and not feel the pang that reminded him of Lucilla! Between them and her was an affinity which his imagination could not sever. Every one that we have loved has something in nature especially devoted to their memory; a peculiar flower, a breath of air, a leaf, a tone. What love is without some such association,

"Striking the electric chain wherewith we're bound?"

But the dim, and shadowy, and solemn stars were indeed meet remembrancers of Volktman's wild daughter; and so intimately was their light connected in Godolphin's breast with that one image, that their very softness had, to his eyes, something fearful and menancing—although as in sadness, not in anger.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE FULL RENEWAL OF LOVE.—HAPPINESS PRODUCES FEAR, "AND IN TO-DAY ALREADY WALKS TO-MORROW."

Oh, first love! well sang the gay minstrel of France, that we return again and again to thee. As the earth returns to its spring, and is green once more, we go back to the life of life, and forget the seasons that have rolled between! Whether it was—perhaps so—that in the minds of both was a feeling that their present state was not fated to endure; whether they felt, in the deep calm they enjoyed, that the storm was already at hand; whether this was the truth, I know not; but certain it was, that, during the short time they remained at Godolphin Priory previous to their earthly separation, Constance and Godolphin were rather like lovers for the first time united, than like those who have dragged on the chain for years. Their perfect solitude, the absence of all intrusion, so unlike the life they had long passed, renewed all that charm, that rapture in each other's society which belongs to the first youth of love. True, that this could not have endured long; but Fate suffered it to endure to the last of that tether which remained to their union. Constance was not again doomed to the severe and grating shock which the sense of estrangement brings to a woman's heart; she was sensible that Godolphin was never so entirely, so passionately her own as towards the close of their mortal connexion. Everything around them breathed of their first love. This was that home of Godolphin's to which, from the splendid halls of Wendover, the young soul of the proud orphan had so often and so mournfully flown with a yearning and wistful interest: this was that spot in which he, awa-

king from the fever of the world, had fed his first dreams of *her*. The scene, the solitude, was as a bath to their love; it braced, it freshened, it revived its tone. They wandered, they read, they thought together: the air of the spot was an intoxication. The world around and without was agitated; they felt it not: the breakers of the great deep died in murmurs on their ear. Ambition lulled its voice to Constance; Godolphin had realized his visions of the ideal. Time had dimmed their young beauty, but their eyes saw it not; they were young, they were all beautiful to each other.

And Constance hung on the steps of her lover—still let that name be his! She could not bear to lose him for a moment: a vague indistinctness of fear seized her if she saw him not. Again and again, in the slumbers of the night, she stretched forth her arms to feel that he was near; all her pride, her coldness seemed gone, as by a spell; she loved as the softest, the fondest love. Are we, oh Ruler of the future! imbued with the half-felt spirit of prophecy as the hour of evil approaches—the great, the fierce, the irremediable evil of a life? In this depth and intensity of their renewed passion, was there not something preternatural? Did they not tremble as they loved? They were on a spot to which the dark waters were slowly gathering; they clung to the hour, for eternity was lowering round.

It was one evening that a foreboding emotion of this kind weighed heavily on Constance. She pressed Godolphin's hand in hers, and when he returned the pressure she threw herself on his neck and burst into tears. Godolphin was alarmed; he covered her cheek with kisses; he sought the cause of her emotion.

"There is no cause," answered Constance, recovering herself, but speaking in a faltering voice, "only I feel the impossibility that this happiness can last; its excess makes me shudder!"

As she spoke, the wind rose and swept mournfully over the large leaves of the chestnut-tree beneath

which they stood: the serene stillness of the evening seemed gone; an unquiet and melancholy spirit was loosened abroad; and the chill of the sudden change, which is so frequent to our climate, came piercingly upon them. Godolphin was silent for some moments, for the thought found a sympathy in his own.

"And is it truly so?" he said at last; "is there really to be no permanent happiness for us below? Is the pain always to tread the heels of pleasure? Are we never to say the harbour is reached, and we are safe? No, my Constance," he added, warming into the sanguine vein that traversed even his most desponding moods, "no! let us not cherish this dark belief; there is no experience for the future; one hour lies to the next: if what has been seem thus checkered, it is no type of what may be. We have discovered in each other that world that was long lost to our eyes: we cannot lose it again: death only can separate us!"

"Ah, *death!*" said Constance, shuddering.

"Do not recoil at that word, my Constance, for we are yet in the noon of life; why bring, like the Egyptian, the spectre to the feast? And, after all, if death come while we thus love, it is better than change and time—better than custom which palls—better than age which chills. Oh!" continued Godolphin, passionately, "oh! if this narrow shoal and sand of time be but a breathing-spot in the great heritage of immortality, why cheat ourselves with words so vague as life and death! What is the difference? At most, the entrance in and the departure from one scene in our wide career. How many scenes are left to us! We do but hasten our journey, not close it. Let us believe this, Constance, and cast from us all fear of our disunion."

As he spoke, Constance's eyes were fixed upon his face, and the deep calm that reigned there sank into her soul and silenced its murmurs. The thought of futurity is that which Godolphin (because it is so with all idealists) must have revolved with the most frequent fervour; but it was a thought that he so rarely touched

upon, that it was the first and only time Constance ever heard it breathed from his lips.

They turned into the house; and the mark is still in that page of the volume which they read where the melodious accents of Godolphin died upon the heart of Constance. Can she ever turn to it again?

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE LAST CONVERSATION BETWEEN GODOLPHIN AND CONSTANCE.—HIS THOUGHTS AND SOLITARY WALK AMID THE SCENES OF HIS YOUTH.—THE LETTER.—THE DEPARTURE.

They had denied themselves to all the visiters that had attacked the Priory; but, on their first arrival, they had deemed it necessary to conciliate their neighbours by concentrating into one formal act of hospitality all those social courtesies which they could not persuade themselves to relinquish their solitude in order singly to perform. Accordingly, a day had been fixed for one grand *fête* at the Priory; it was to follow close on the election, and be considered as in honour of that event. The evening for this gala succeeded that which I have recorded in the last chapter. It was with great reluctance that they prepared themselves to greet this sole interruption of their seclusion; and they laughed, although they did not laugh cordially, at the serious annoyance which the giving a ball was for the first time to occasion to persons who had been almost doing nothing else but giving balls for a succession of years.

The day was remarkably still and close; the sun had not once pierced through the dull atmosphere, which was charged with the yet silent but gathering thunder; and, as the evening came on, the sullen tokens of an approaching storm became more and more loweringly pronounced.

"We shall not, I fear, have propitious weather for our festival to-night," said Godolphin; "but, after a general election, people's nerves are tolerably hardened: what are the petty fret and the tumult of nature, lasting but an hour, to the angry and everlasting passions of men?"

"A profound deduction from a wet night, dear Percy," said Constance, smiling.

"Like our friend C——," rejoined Godolphin, in the same vein, "I can philosophize on the putting on one's gloves, you know:" and therewith their conversation flowed into a vein singularly contrasted with the character of the coming events. Time fled on as they were thus engaged until Constance started up, surprised at the lateness of the hour, to attend the duties of the toilet.

"Wear this, dearest," said Godolphin, taking a rose from a flower-stand by the window, "in memory of that ball at Wendover Castle which, although itself passed bitterly enough for me, has yet left so many happy recollections." Constance put the rose into her bosom; its leaves were then all fresh and brilliant —so were her prospects for the future. He kissed her forehead as they parted; they parted for the last time.

Godolphin, left alone, turned to the window, which, opening to the ground, invited him forth among the flowers that studded the grassplots which sloped away to the dark and unwaving trees that girded the lawn. That pause of nature which precedes a storm ever had a peculiar attraction to his mind; and instinctively he sauntered from the house, wrapped in the dreaming, half-developed thought which belonged to his temperament. Mechanically he strayed on until he found himself beside the still lake which the hollows of the dismantled park imbedded. There he paused, gazing unconsciously on the gloomy shadows which fell from the arches of the Priory and the tall trees around. Not a ripple stirred the broad expanse of waters; the birds had gone to rest; no sound, save the voice of the distant brook, that fed the lake beside which, on the first

night of his return to his ancestral home, he had wandered with Constance, broke the universal silence. That voice was never mute. All else might be dumb; but that living stream, rushing through its rocky bed, stilled not its repining music. Like the soul of the landscape is the gush of a fresh stream; it knows no sleep, no pause; it works for ever—the life, the cause of life, to all around. The great frame of nature may repose, but the spirit of the waters rests not for a moment. As the soul of the landscape is the soul of man, in our deepest slumbers its course glides on, and works unsilent, unslumbering, through its destined channel.

With slow steps and folded arms Godolphin moved on. The well-remembered scenes of his childhood were all before him: the wild verdure of the fern—the broken ground, with its thousand mimic mounts and valleys—the deep dell, overgrown with matted shrubs, and dark as a wizard's cave—the remains of many a stately vista, where the tender greens of the lime showed soft, even in that dusky light, beneath the richer leaves of the chestnut—all was familiar and home-breathing to his mind. Fragments of boyish verse, forgotten for years, rose hauntingly to his remembrance, telling of wild thoughts, unsatisfied dreams, disappointed hopes.

"But I am happy at last," said he, aloud; "yes, happy. I have passed that bridge of life which divides us from the follies of youth, and better prospects and nobler desires extend before me. What a world of wisdom in that one saying of Radclyffe's, 'Benevolence is the sole cure to idealism;' to live for others draws us from demanding miracles for ourselves. What duty as yet have I fulfilled? I renounced ambition as unwise, and with it I renounced wisdom itself. I lived for pleasure—I lived the life of disappointment. Without one vicious disposition, I have fallen into a hundred vices; I have never been *actively* selfish, yet always selfish. I nursed high thoughts—for what end? A poet in heart, a voluptuary in life. If mine own interest came into clear collision with that of another, mine

I would have sacrificed; but I never asked if the whole course of my existence was not that of a war with the universal interest. Too thoughtful to be without a leading principle in life, the one principle I have adopted has been one error. I have tasted all that imagination can give to earthly possession—youth, health, liberty, knowledge, love, luxury, pomp. Woman was my first passion—what woman have I wooed in vain? I imagined that my career hung upon Constance's breath—Constance loved and refused me. I attributed my errors to that refusal: Constance became mine—how have I retrieved them? A vague, a dim, an unconfessed remorse has pursued me in the memory of Lucilla; yet why not have redeemed that fault to her by good to others? What is penitence not put into action but the great fallacy in morals? A sin to one, if irremediable, can only be compensated by a virtue to some one else. And was I to blame in my conduct to Lucilla? Why should conscience so haunt me at that name? Did I not fly her? Was it not herself who compelled our union? Did I not cherish, respect, honour, forbear with her, more than I have since with my wedded Constance? Did I not resolve to renounce Constance herself, when most loved, for Lucilla's sake alone? Who prevented that sacrifice? who deserted me? who carved out her own separate life?—Lucilla herself. No; so far, my sin is light. But ought I not to have left all things to follow her, to discover her, to force upon her an independence from want, or possibly crime? Ah, there was my sin, and the sin of my nature; the sin, too, of the children of the world—*passive sin*. I could sacrifice my happiness, but not my indolence; I was not ungenerous, I was inert. But is it too late? Can I not yet search, discover her, and remove from my mind the anxious burden which her remembrance imposes on it? For oh, one thought of remorse linked with the being who has loved us, is more intolerable to the conscience than the gravest crime!"

Muttering such thoughts, Godolphin strayed on until

the deepening of night suddenly recalled his attention to the lateness of the hour. He turned to the house and entered his own apartment. Several of the guests had already come. Godolphin was yet dressing when a servant knocked at the door and presented him a note.

"Lay it on the table," said he to the valet; "it is probably some excuse about the ball."

"Sir," said the servant, "a lad has just brought it from S***," naming a village about four miles distant, "and says he is to wait for an answer. He was ordered to ride as fast as possible."

With some impatience Godolphin took up the note; but, the moment his eye rested on the writing, it fell from his hands; his cheek, his lips, grew as white as death; his heart seemed to refuse its functions; it was literally as if life stood still for a moment, as by the force of a sudden poison. With a strong effort he recovered himself, tore open the note, and read as follows:

"Percy Godolphin, the hour has arrived: once more we shall meet. I summon you, fair love, to that meeting—the bed of death. Come!

"Lucilla Volktman."

"Don't alarm the countess," said Godolphin to his servant, in a very low, calm voice; "bring my horse to the postern, and send the bearer of this note to me."

The messenger appeared—a rough country lad of about eighteen or twenty.

"You brought this note?"

"I did, your honour."

"From whom?"

"Why, a sort of a strange lady, as is lying at the 'Checkers,' and not expected to live. She be mortal bad, sir, and do run on awesome."

Godolphin pressed his hands convulsively together.

"And how long has she been there?"

"She only came about two hours since, sir; she came in a chaise, sir, and was taken so ill that we sent

for the doctor directly. He says she can't get over the night."

Godolphin walked to and fro, without trusting himself to speak for some minutes. The boy stood by the door, pulling about his hat, and wondering, and staring, and thoroughly stupid.

"Did she come alone?"

"Eh, your honour."

"Was no one with her?"

"Oh, yes! a little nigger girl: she it was sent me with the letter."

"The horse is ready, sir," said the servant: "but had you not better have the carriage brought out? It looks very black; it must rain shortly, sir; and the ford between this and S*** is very dangerous to cross in so dark a night."

"Peace!" cried Godolphin, with flashing eyes, and a low, convulsive laugh. "Shall I ride to that deathbed at my ease and leisure?"

He strode rapidly down the stairs and reached the small postern door: it was a part of the old building: one of the grooms held his impatient horse—the swiftest in his splendid stud; and the dim but flaring light, held by another of the servitors, streamed against the dull heavens, and the imperfectly seen and frowning ruins of the ancient pile.

Godolphin, unconscious of all around, and muttering to himself, leaped on his steed: the fire glinted from the courser's hoofs; and thus the last lord of that knightly race bade farewell to his father's halls. Those words which he had muttered, and which his favourite servant caught and superstitiously remembered, were the words in Lucilla's note—"*The hour has arrived!*"

CHAPTER THE LAST.

A DREAD MEETING.—THE STORM.—THE CATASTROPHE.

On the humble pallet of the village lay the broken form of the astrologer's expiring daughter. The surgeon of the place sat by the bedside, dismayed and terrified, despite his hardened vocation, by the wild words and ghastly shrieks that ever and anon burst from the lips of the dying woman. The words were, indeed, uttered in a foreign tongue unfamiliar to the leech; a language not ordinarily suited to inspire terror; the language of love, and poetry, and music; the language of the sweet South. But, uttered in that voice where the passions of the soul still wrestled against the gathering weakness of the frame, the soft syllables sounded harsh and fearful; and the dishevelled looks of the sufferer—the wandering fire of the sunken eyes—the distorted gestures of the thin, transparent arms, gave fierce effect to the unknown words, and betrayed the dark strength of the delirium which raged upon her.

One wretched light on the rude table opposite the bed broke the gloom of the mean chamber, and across the window flashed the first lightnings of the storm about to break. By the other side of the bed sat, mute, watchful, tearless, the Moorish girl, who was Lucilla's sole attendant; her eyes fixed on the sufferer with faithful, unwearying love; her ears listening, with all the quick sense of her race, to catch, amid the growing noises of the storm and the tread of hurrying steps below, the expected sound of the hoofs that should herald Godolphin's approach.

Suddenly, as if exhausted by the paroxysm of her disease, Lucilla's voice sank into silence; and she lay so still, so motionless, that, but for the faint and wavering pulse of the hand, which the surgeon was now suffered to hold, they might have believed the tortured spirit was already released. This torpor lasted for

some minutes, when, raising herself up, as a bright gleam of intelligence stole over the hollow cheeks, Lucilla put her finger to her lips, smiled, and said, in a low, clear voice, "Hark! he comes!"

The Moor crept across the chamber, and, opening the door, stood there in a listening attitude. *She*, as yet, heard not the tread of the speeding charger; a moment, and it smote her ear; a moment more, it halted by the inn door: the snort of the panting horse—the rush of steps—Percy Godolphin was in the room—was by the bedside—the poor sufferer was in his arms; and softened, thrilled, overpowered, Lucilla resigned herself to that dear caress: she drank in the sobs of his choked voice; she felt still, as in happier days, burning into her heart the magic of his kisses. One instant of youth, of love, of hope, broke into that desolate and fearful hour, and silent and scarcely conscious tears gushed from her aching eyes, and laved, as it were, the burden and the agony from her heart.

The Moor traversed the room, and, laying one hand on the surgeon's shoulder, pointed to the door. Lucilla and Godolphin were alone.

"Oh!" said he, at last finding voice, "is it thus—thus we meet? But say not that you are dying, Lucilla! have mercy, mercy upon your betrayer, your—"

Here he could utter no more; he sank beside her, covering his face with his hands, and sobbing bitterly.

The momentary lucid interval for Lucilla had passed away; the maniac rapture returned, although in a mild and solemn shape.

"Blame not yourself," said she, earnestly; "the remorseless stars are the sole betrayers: yet, bright and lovely as they once seemed when they assured me of a bond between thee and me, I could not dream that their still and shining lore could forebode such gloomy truths. Oh, Percy! since we parted, the earth has not been *as* the earth to me: the *Natural* has left my life; a weird and roving spirit has entered my breast, and filled my brain, and possessed my thoughts, and moved every spring of my existence: the sun and the air, the green herb, the freshness and glory of the world,

have been covered with a mist, in which only dim shapes of dread were shadowed forth. But thou, my love, on whose breast I have dreamed such blessed dreams, wert not to blame. No! the power that crushes we cannot accuse: the heavens are above the reach of our reproach; they smile upon our agony; they bid the seasons roll on, unmoved and unsympathizing, above our broken hearts. And what has been my course since your last kiss on these dying lips? Godolphin"—and here Lucilla drew herself apart from him, and writhed, as with some bitter memory—"these lips have felt other kisses, and these ears have drunk unhallowed sounds, and wild revelry and wilder passion have made me laugh over the sepulchre of my soul. But I am a poor creature; poor, poor—mad, Percy—mad—they tell me so!" Then, in the sudden changes incident to her disease, Lucilla continued, "I saw your bride, Percy, when you bore her from Rome, and the wheels of your bridal carriage swept over me, for I flung myself in their way; but they scathed me not: the bright demons above ordained otherwise, and I wandered over the world; but you shall know not," added Lucilla, with a laugh of dreadful levity, "whither or with whom, for we must have concealments, my love, as you will confess; and I strove to forget you, and my brain sank in the effort. I felt my frame withering, and they told me my doom was fixed, and I resolved to come to England, and look on my first love once more: so I came, and I saw you, Godolphin; and I knew, by the wrinkles in your brow and the musing thought in your eye, that your proud lot had not brought you content. And then there came to me a stately shape, and I knew it for her for whom you had deserted me: she told me, as you tell me, to live, to forget the past. Mockery, mockery! But my heart is proud as hers, Percy, and I would not stoop to the kindness of a triumphant rival; and I fled, what matters it whither? But listen, Percy, listen; my woes had made me wise in that science which is not of earth, and I knew that you and I must meet once more, and that that meeting would be in this hour;

and I counted, minute by minute, with a savage gladness, the days that were to bring on this interview and my death!" Then raising her voice into a wild shriek, "Beware, beware, Percy! the rush of waters is on my ear—the splash, the gurgle! Beware! *your* last hour also is at hand!"

From the moment in which she uttered these words, Lucilla relapsed into her former frantic paroxysms. Shriek followed shriek; she appeared to know none around her, not even Godolphin. With throes and agony the soul seemed to wrench itself from the frame. The hours swept on—midnight came—clear and distinct the voice of the clock below reached that chamber.

"Hush!" cried Lucilla, starting. "Hush!" and just at that moment, through the window opposite, the huge clouds, breaking in one spot, discovered high and far above them a solitary star.

"Thine, thine, Godolphin!" she shrieked forth, pointing to the lonely orb; "it summons thee; farewell, but not for long!"

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The Moor rushed forward with a loud cry; she placed her hand on Lucilla's bosom; the heart was still, the breath was gone, the fire had vanished from the ashes; that strange, unearthly spirit was perhaps with the stars for whose mysteries it had so vainly yearned.

Down fell the black rain in torrents; and far from the mountains you might hear the rushing of the swollen streams, as they poured into the bosom of the valleys. The sullen, continued mass of cloud was broken, and the vapours hurried fast and lowering over the heavens, leaving now and then a star to glitter forth ere again "the jaws of darkness did devour it up." At the lower verge of the horizon the lightning flashed fierce, but at lingering intervals; the trees rocked and groaned beneath the rains and storm; and, immediately above the bowed head of a solitary horseman, broke the thunder that, amid the whirl of his own emotions, he scarcely heard.

Beside a stream which the rains had already swelled was a gipsy encampment; and as some of the dusky itinerants, waiting, perhaps, the return of a part of their band from their predatory excursion, cowered over the flickering fires in their tent, they perceived the horseman rapidly approaching the stream.

"See to yon gentry cove," cried one of the band; "'tis the same we saw in the forenight crossing the ford above. He has taken a short cut, the buzzard! and will have to go round again to the ford; a precious time to be gallivanting about!"

"Pish!" said an old hag; "I love to see the proud ones tasting the bitter wind and rain as we bears alway; 'tis but a mile longer round to the ford. I wish it was twenty."

"Hallo!" cried the first speaker; "the fool takes to the water. He'll be drowned; the banks are too high and rough to land man or horse yonder. Hallo!" and with that painful sympathy which the hardest feel at the imminent peril of another when immediately subjected to their eyes, the gipsy ran forth into the pelting storm, shouting to the traveller to halt. For one moment Godolphin's steed still shrunk back from the rushing tide: deep darkness was over the water, and the horseman saw not the height of the opposite banks. The shout of the gipsy sounded to his ear like the cry of the dead whom he had left: he dashed his heels into the sides of the reluctant horse, and was in the stream.

"Light—light the torches!" cried the gipsy; and in a few moments the banks were illumined with many a brand from the fire, which the rain, however, almost instantly extinguished; yet by that momentary light they saw the noble animal breasting the waters, and perceived that Godolphin, discovering by the depth his mistake, had already turned the horse's head in the direction of the ford: they could see no more, but they shouted to Godolphin to turn back to the place from which he had plunged; and, in a few minutes afterward, they heard, several yards above, the horse clambering up the rugged banks, which there were

steep and high, and crushing the boughs that clothed the ascent. They thought, at the same time, that they distinguished also the splash of a heavy substance in the waves; but they fancied it some detached fragment of earth or stone, and turned to their tent in the belief that the daring rider had escaped the peril he had so madly incurred. That night the riderless steed of Godolphin arrived at the porch of the Priory, where Constance, alarmed, pale, breathless, stood exposed to the storm, awaiting the return of Godolphin, or the messengers she had despatched in search of him.

At daybreak his corpse was found by the shallows of the ford; and the mark of violence across the temples, as of some blow, led them to guess that in scaling the banks his head had struck against one of the tossing boughs that overhung them, and the blow had precipitated him into the waters.

LETTER

FROM CONSTANCE, COUNTESS OF ERPINGHAM, TO *******.

"*August*, 1832.

"I HAVE read the work you have so kindly compiled from the papers transmitted to your care, and from your own intimate knowledge of those to whom they relate, you have, in much, fulfilled my wishes with singular success. On the one hand, I have been anxious that a history should be given to the world, from which lessons so deep and, I firmly believe, salutary, may be generally derived: on the other hand, I have been anxious that it should be clothed in such disguises that the names of the real actors in the drama should be for ever a secret. Both these objects you have attained. It is impossible, I think, for any one to read the book about to be published without being

impressed with the truth of the moral it is intended to convey, and without seeing, by a thousand infallible signs, that its spring and its general course have flowed from reality and not fiction. Yet have you, by a few slight alterations and additions, managed to effect that concealment of names and persons which is due no less to the living than to the memory of the dead.

"So far I thank you from my heart; but in one point you have utterly failed. You have done no justice to the noble character you meant to delineate under the name of Godolphin; you have drawn his likeness with a harsh and cruel pencil; you have enlarged on the few weaknesses he might have possessed, until you have made them the foreground of the portrait; and his vivid generosity, his high honour, his brilliant intellect, the extraordinary stores of his mind, you have left in shadow. Oh God! that for such a being such a destiny was reserved! and in the pride of life, just when his mind had awakened to a sense of its own powers and their legitimate objects! What a fatal system of things, that could, for thirty-seven years, have led away, by the pursuits and dissipations of a life suited but to the beings he despised, a genius of such an order, a heart of such tender emotions!* But on this subject I cannot, cannot write. I must lay down the pen; to-morrow I will try and force myself to resume it.

"Well, then, I say you have not done justice to *him*. I beseech you to remodel that character, and atone to the memory of one whom none ever saw but to admire, or knew but to love.

"Of me—of me, the vain, the scheming, the proud, the unfeminine cherisher of bitter thoughts, of stern designs—of me, on the other hand, how flattering is the picture you have drawn! In that flattery is my sure disguise, therefore I will not ask you to shade it

* The reader will acquit me of the charge of injustice to Godolphin's character when he arrives at this sentence; it conveys exactly the impression that my delineation, faithful to truth, is intended to convey—the influences of our actual world on the ideal and imaginative order of mind.

into the poor and unlovely truth. But while, with agony and shame, I feel that you have rightly described that seeming neglectfulness of one no more, which sprang from the pride that believed *itself* neglected, you have not said enough—no, not one millionth part enough—of the *real love* that I constantly bore to him; the only soft and redeeming portion of my nature. But who can know, who can describe what another feels? Even I knew not what I felt until death taught it me.

"Since I have read the whole book, one thought constantly haunts me—the strangeness that I should survive his loss; that the stubborn strings of my heart have not been broken long since; that I live, and live, too, amid the world! Ay, but not one *of* the world; with that consciousness I sustain myself in the petty and steril career of life. Shut out, henceforth and for ever, from all the tenderer feelings that belong to my sex; without mother, husband, child, or friend; unloved and unloving, I support myself by the belief that I have done the little suffered to my sex in expediting the great change which is advancing on the world; and I cheer myself by the firm assurance that, sooner or later, a time must come when those vast disparities in life which have been fatal, not to myself alone, but to all I have admired and loved; which render the great heartless, and the lowly servile; which make genius either an enemy to mankind or the victim to itself; which debase the energetic purpose; which fritter away the ennobling sentiment; which cool the heart and fetter the capacities, and are favourable only to the general development of the mediocre and the lukewarm, shall, if never utterly removed, at least be smoothed away into more genial and unobstructed elements of society. Alas! it is with an aching eye that we look abroad for the only solace, the only occupation of life—solitude at home, and memory at our hearth."

THE END.

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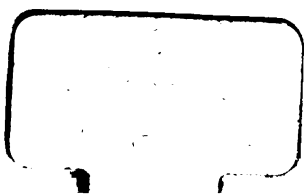
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